

The Rediscovery of Galicia in the Revival of the Camino de Santiago: Changing Images
of Galicia in Modern Pilgrim Accounts

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which narratives of modern pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago portray Galicia, the northwestern region of Spain whose cathedral in Santiago de Compostela has been one of the world's most important pilgrimage destinations since the Middle Ages. The region has long been depicted as a backward, primitive culture by Spaniards and foreigners alike. These ideas have evolved in recent decades, however, and some of the very same traits for which Galicia was ridiculed are now celebrated. This new perspective emerges in several contemporary accounts written in the midst of a large international revival of the pilgrimage that began in the 1980s. Through an analysis of several modern pilgrim narratives, including *Road of Stars to Santiago* (1994) by Edward Stanton, *El Camino: Walking to Santiago de Compostela* (1996) by Lee Hoinacki, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (1998) by Nancy Louise Frey, *I'm Off Then: Losing and Finding Myself on the Camino de Santiago* (2006) by Hape Kerkeling, *Tras los pasos del sol: Hasta el fin del mundo por el Camino de Santiago* (2008) by Mariano N. Encina Amatriain, and *Mochila y Bordón, reflexiones en el Camino de Santiago* (2004) by Teresa Simal, I aim to demonstrate how modern non-Galician pilgrims contribute to or dispel stereotypes of the region.

In order to illustrate a change in perceptions of Galicia, I will compare these narratives to older pilgrim and travel accounts such as *The Way of St. James* (1920) by Georgiana Goddard King and *A Hand-book for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home*

(1845) by Richard Ford. More importantly, I will explore the reasons behind the transformation in pilgrims' visions of Galicia by examining certain tendencies in Spanish and Galician literature, as well as several aspects of 20th-century Spanish society. Finally, I will discuss the impact of the Camino de Santiago on Galicia throughout its history, particularly in light of the recent and significant increase in pilgrims and the subsequent commercialization of many aspects of the route to Compostela. I hope that my study will contribute to an understanding of Galician identity today, and the ways in which this has been, and continues to be, shaped by the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

To Juanjo, and to my parents

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Introduction

For over a millennium, millions have trekked across Europe to one of its westernmost points, a remote region called Galicia which was once believed to be the end of the earth. The masses were, and still are today, pilgrims headed toward what is said to be the tomb of the apostle St. James the Greater. The discovery of the apostle's remains in the ninth century was a monumental finding, one that would convert the remote Santiago de Compostela into one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in the medieval world, rivaled only by Jerusalem and Rome. The Camino de Santiago, the Way of Santiago or the so-called Road of Stars that led the faithful to Compostela, has been credited with the formation of the continent. As Goethe so famously declared, "Europe was born on the pilgrim road to Santiago". The pilgrimage would also shape the history of Galicia, and its moments of glory would coincide with those of the northwestern region of the Iberian Peninsula. In the early 21st century, in the midst of an extraordinary revival of the medieval pilgrimage, I would like to examine the relationship between the rebirth of the Way and the region that has once again become the destination of this international phenomenon.

In order to understand the pilgrimage and pilgrims today, my first chapter will explain the origins of the Jacobean Way and its transformations, due to politics, ideological movements in Europe, etc., throughout the centuries. In the second chapter I will focus on 20th-century Spain,

when the modern revival of the pilgrimage began, in order both to examine how such a revival occurred and also to understand how Spanish society has been transformed in the last half century. All of this is related to, and essential to fully understand, the main focus of my thesis: the impact that Jacobean pilgrimage has had on Galicia; specifically, on the image of Galicia created by outsiders, particularly in the last few decades of the 20th century and the first years of this new millennium. In Chapter 3, I will give an overview of Galician history and try to make sense of how the region has “fit”, or not, into Spanish history. The region’s past and its relationship with the rest of Spain are directly related to the ways in which others, both Spaniards and foreigners, have portrayed Galicia. To demonstrate this point, I will examine representations of Galicians in Spanish literature and especially in various pilgrimage narratives, from the first guide in the Middle Ages, *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, to accounts written by early to mid-20th century pilgrims, including *The Way of St. James* (1920) by Georgiana Goddard King. In Chapter 4, I will contrast these earlier portrayals of the region with those that have emerged in pilgrim accounts since the 1960s and ’70s, attempting to shed light upon the reasons for an important transformation in the region’s image, both within and beyond Spain’s borders. The 20th and 21st-century pilgrim narratives I will discuss are written by pilgrims from a variety of backgrounds and from several countries, including Spain, the United States, Canada, Northern Ireland, France, Netherlands, Germany, and Argentina. A few of these titles are Hape Kerkeling’s *I’m Off Then: Losing and Finding Myself on the Camino de Santiago* (2006), Cees Nooteboom’s *Roads to Santiago* (1992), Robert Ward’s *All the Good Pilgrims: Tales of the Camino de Santiago* (2007), Julio Pelayo Cortázar’s *De Roncesvalles a Santiago, paso a paso* (1999), and Teresa Simal’s *Mochila y Bordón, reflexiones en el Camino de Santiago* (2004). Part of my study will also

include a discussion of Galicia's cultural revival movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, of which a fundamental objective was a renewal of their region's image, a renewal which seems to have occurred, based on foreign pilgrims' accounts, long after the nationalists who advocated it have disappeared.

Chapter 4 will also examine how the same modern pilgrim accounts that dispel centuries-old negative stereotypes about the region reinforce other ideas that, while far more pleasant than the former stereotypes, are sometimes inaccurate or over-generalized representations of Galicia. In Chapter 5, I will attempt to explain the reasons behind these new portrayals of the land by examining certain tendencies in Galician literature, as well as aspects of 20th century society. The opinions of contemporary Galician writers and scholars will be taken into account in this discussion. Finally, in Chapter 6, I will take a closer look not only at the region's changing image, but at recent socioeconomic and cultural transformations that coincide with the new international face of Galicia. Many of these changes are related in some way to the growth of the pilgrimage to Santiago, and I am interested in understanding how this new phenomenon affects Galicia, both the image of the region from the outside and its economic and sociocultural reality in the 21st century.

Chapter 1: The Early History of the Camino de Santiago

Although Jacobean pilgrimage did not begin until the Middle Ages, a great devotion to this saint on the peninsula in which his remains are said to lie can be traced back nearly two millennia. According to legend, St. James, son of Zebedee and brother of John, was most likely in the Iberian Peninsula between the years 33 and 42 A.D. to preach Christ's Gospel. The fisherman-turned- apostle later returned to Jerusalem, where he was condemned to death and beheaded by Herod Agrippa in the year 44, becoming the first of Jesus' apostles to be martyred. Medieval texts as well as legends maintain that the apostle's disciples fled the city with his body, transporting it by boat to the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula and arriving at the diocese of Iria Flavia (now Padrón) in Galicia. Due to persecution of Christians at the time, the apostle's followers secretly buried the sacred remains not far from the sea, on a mount that is now Santiago de Compostela. Legends vary greatly, some alleging that St. James' body traveled in a boat with neither sailors nor oars, arriving miraculously. Others say that Queen Lupa, the local pagan leader, put his disciples to the test before allowing them to inter the holy figure in her lands. Regardless of what exactly happened two thousand years ago, what seems clear is that the tomb would be forgotten for centuries (Singul 28).

Meanwhile, St. James' evangelization in the Peninsula resulted in a widespread cult of the saint, which was promoted by bishops, kings and religious organizations such as the Cluniac

order. The seventh-century Latin text *Breviarium apostolorum* recorded the saint's death and burial, and adoration of the apostle spread throughout Europe, strengthened with *romances*, legends, hymns, and other written texts. In fact, St. James the Greater was credited with the evangelization of the whole peninsula, and even became to be regarded as the evangelizer of the Western World (Singul 38). Even before his tomb was discovered, St. James was the patron saint of the last Christian stronghold of Hispania.

The discovery of the apostle's tomb

Given the importance of this holy protector of the kingdom, one can imagine the commotion caused when, in the first decades of the 9th century, St. James' tomb was discovered in the diocese of Iria Flavia. A hermit by the name of Pelayo (or Paio)¹ would be the individual responsible for the discovery that would bring medieval Christians en masse to Galicia. In the summer of 813, the hermit saw marvelous lights in the night sky illuminating the forest of Libredón, all of them converging on one point in the center of the field. Convinced that these lights were something extraordinary, even supernatural, the hermit notified the bishop Teodomiro of Flavia, who rushed to investigate the sighting and discovered the tomb of the apostle and two disciples in an ancient burial ground (Singul 32-33). King Alfonso II of Asturias, notified of the monumental discovery by Teodomiro, went to visit the tomb in person, thus becoming the first official pilgrim in a dozen centuries of pilgrimage to the sacred place. By the

¹ Other legends say that a group of shepherds discovered the tomb. While guarding their flocks, they saw a bright star in the sky, which led them to the tomb.

king's orders, the remote field became the site of a cathedral in the city which took the name of Saint James (Sant Iago) of Compostela.²

Modern readers will most likely question the validity of such a discovery, and they are not alone. Whether or not the remains belong to St. James, to Priscillian³, or to someone else has been a highly debated issue for centuries, and Américo Castro was undoubtedly correct when he wrote, “Mal le hubiera ido a Santiago de Galicia si su eficacia hubiese dependido de las comprobaciones” (Castro 126). However, what matters for European history is that the discovery of the apostle's tomb, authentic or not, was one of the most important events of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, Américo Castro maintains that

The history of Spain cannot be understood without a knowledge and understanding of the veneration paid to Saint James the Apostle and of the pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. That is to say, the history of Spain would have been entirely different without the belief that in that city reposes the body of one of Christ's disciples and companions, beheaded in Palestine and translated to Spain by miraculous means (130).

Scholars agree that the discovery of the tomb and the subsequent phenomenon of pilgrimage shaped the history of Europe, of Spain and of Galicia. As Francisco Singul explains, “The news of the discovery stirred up the religious sensibility of the weak Post-Carolingian Europe, transcending political and linguistic frontiers. The universality of [St.] James' evangelic message

² While the etymology for Santiago seems certain, there is more debate about that of Compostela. Some suggest that it comes from *de Campus Stellae*, “field of the star”, but Thomas Coffey, Linda Kay Davidson and Maryjane Dunn claim this theory has been discarded by most scholars. Other etymologies indicate that “Compostela” may be derived from words indicating “pretty place”, or “burial land” (XXV).

³ Priscillian, theologian and bishop of Ávila, founded an ascetic group and in the late fourth century became the first Christian to be executed for heresy. Despite the Catholic Church's opposition to his teachings, these enjoyed a wide following in and beyond the Iberian Peninsula for centuries. Like St. James, Priscillian was beheaded, and some claim that his remains were hidden by his followers in the tomb now known as that of St. James the Greater.

provoked a massive popular response that was unprecedented in Western Christianity of the High Middle Ages” (59).⁴ By the mid-10th century, a European pilgrimage tradition to the apostle’s tomb had begun to form, and by the 11th and 12th centuries, pilgrims flocked to Santiago from all over western Christendom (Gitlitz and Davidson xiv). Several pilgrimage roads laced throughout the Iberian Peninsula and throughout Europe, including what is now the most common road through northern Spain, the French Road. It seemed that in the Middle Ages, all roads led to Rome —and to Santiago de Compostela. Tenth-century pilgrims included bishops, archbishops and kings. Charlemagne, the Catholic Kings (Isabel and Fernando), Fernando III, Sancho IV, Alfonso IX, Isabel of Portugal, Louis VII of France, Edward I of England, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Brigid of Sweden and St. Vicente Ferrer are some of the important figures that walked the Road over the centuries (Huidobro y Serna v1, 219). This is not to mention the masses of “ordinary” people that left behind their families, farms and villages all over Europe to walk to the holy city⁵. Peasants, poets, lepers, nuns, monks, gypsies, prostitutes, artisans, and thieves all walked on the same roads alongside these kings and saints.

Although no exact tallies are to be found, current research indicates thousands of pilgrims a year in ordinary years, and possibly hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in “special years” during the Middle Ages (Coffey, Davidson and Dunn xxii). The French were very often pilgrims, the first of whom to be documented was Bishop Godescalc of Le Puy around the year 950 (Stones and Krochalis 15). Even the Cid himself, as a popular ballad relates, was a pilgrim:

⁴ Original text: “A noticia do descubrimiento conmoveu a sensibilidade relixiosa da débil Europa poscarolinxa, transcendendo fronteiras políticas e lingüísticas. A universalidade da mensaxe evanxélica de Santiago suscitou una resposta popular masiva sen precedentes no Occidente altomedieval cristiá.” The remainder of translations in this dissertation, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

⁵ Until approximately the year 1000, however, only clergymen were pilgrims (Mandianes Castro 67).

Ya se parte don Rodrigo,
que de Vivar se apellida,
para visitar Santiago,
adonde va en romería.

Jacobeain literature

The pilgrimage was also the subject of, as well as a place to transmit orally, a great deal of legends and other medieval literature about the Camino and its pilgrims. The most important work of medieval Jacobean literature is the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, commonly known as the *Codex Calixtinus*,⁶ mostly composed between the final years of the episcopacy of Diego Gelmírez (or Xelmírez, 1135- 1140) and later finished between 1150 and 1160 (Singul 196). The Latin work about the French route to Santiago is believed to have been compiled by a French cleric⁷ by the name of Aymeric Picaud, and its five books were meant to record all of the information possible on the cult of Santiago, serving as a type of “Bible” or encyclopedia of the pilgrimage. The first book of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* includes a liturgy for the Mass and office of the feast days of St. James, and other holy days, as well as the sermon *Veneranda dies*, which is very important in recording the pilgrimage in the 12th century (Singul 196-197). The second book compiles twenty-two miracles attributed to St. James, followed by the history of the translation of the saint to Spain in Book III. Books III and IV offer a fictitious account of Charlemagne’s campaigns against the forces of Islam in Spain in the epic poem *Chanson de Roland*. The final book is a

⁶ The *Codex Calixtinus* is the name of the most complete manuscript of the text, kept in the Cathedral in Santiago.

⁷ The authorship of the collection is a subject of debate. See Alison Stones and Jeanne Krochalis, *The Pilgrim’s Guide: A Critical Edition, I: The Manuscripts*, pp 15-27, as well as Francisco Singul, who claims that the LSJ was actually a “collective work inspired by the Jacobism and compostelanismo of Xelmírez” (196).

type of medieval “pilgrim’s guide” attributed to Aymeric Picaud, which relates his impressions of the people and places he encountered during a pilgrimage to Compostela in 1130, as well as practical advice such as where a pilgrim could find good drinking water (199). It is referred to as the first guidebook on the Camino, and even the first tourist guide in history, and was used by early travelers (the few educated ones who could read it) from Italy, Germany, Spain, France, England and beyond.

In addition to this early literary gem on the Camino, other early texts include the *Historia Compostelana* (circa 1100), which aimed to leave a written account of all the “notable” deeds that Diego Gelmírez did to improve the apostolic see (Singul 201). This history of Compostela is regarded as one of the most important historical texts of the Middle Ages in Europe. More than a century later, Gonzalo de Berceo, whose monastery at San Millán de la Cogolla was situated along the Camino, dedicated some of his 13th-century *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* to the Jacobean theme, as did the erudite King Alfonso X in his *Cantigas de Santa María*. Many medieval *juglares* were also inspired by Jacobean themes and miracles, and the Jacobean influence is apparent in the Galician-Portuguese *cancioneiros* from the 12th to the 14th centuries (Singul 215). In addition, as the Camino de Santiago was an extremely important vehicle for the transmission of culture throughout Europe, it facilitated the contact between Galician-Portuguese and Provenzal troubadours, as did the Orders of Cluny and the courts of Alfonso III and Alfonso X. The result was a number of common characteristics between the two literary traditions,⁸ including a Marian cult, the importance of platonic love and the focus on the female figure.

⁸ Galician literary scholars are quick to point out that Galician-Portuguese lyric was influenced by the Provenzal tradition, but was hardly a mere copy of it (Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 10)

(Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 9-11). The sharing of European culture on the pilgrim roads would have an incredible influence on the continent's cultural production for centuries.

In Italy and France, Jacobean pilgrimages were the themes of theatrical representations, especially in the late Middle Ages (Huidobro y Serna v1, 433). In the 14th century, Dante mentions the Apostle in his *Divine Comedy*, “Mira, mira; ecco il barone per cui lagù si visita Galizia”, and some even claim that one of the most famous miracles said to have occurred along the Camino, in O Cebreiro, inspired Richard Wagner's opera *Parsifal*⁹. Fray Luis de León praises the apostle in his poetry, and no less than the masterpiece of Spanish literature, *Don Quijote*, also references the patron saint (Cervantes 2; 472, ch.58). The hymns, ballads, folk music, *romances*, poems, stories, *autos sacramentales* and other literature inspired by the Camino through the ages are countless. Personal accounts of pilgrims to Santiago, of which there have been an overwhelming number in the last few decades, have also been written for hundreds of years, and began to be numerous in the Baroque period (Singul 247).

The Camino in the Middle Ages

The massive spread of the pilgrimage throughout Europe can be explained by the consideration of Santiago as the evangelizing apostle of the Western World, as mentioned previously, by the enthusiastic promotion of kings, bishops and other clergymen, and also by the medieval devotion to saints' bodies and their relics. Throughout medieval Europe, it was

⁹ Although not in fact true, I have found numerous mentions of the association between a 12th-century chalice and Wagner's opera in several pilgrim accounts, written both by Spaniards and foreigners, and in other writings about the Way. The miracle that occurred in O Cebreiro in the 14th century, which turned the host at Mass into actual flesh and blood, earned this Romanic chalice the popular distinction of the “Galician Holy Grail”, and from there somehow came the belief that it had inspired Wagner's work.

believed that holy persons were especially present on earth in the places where their physical remains were found. One could commune more intimately with the saint or other holy person, then, at his tomb. Peter Brown explains that early pilgrims were “not merely going to a place; they were going to a place to meet a person” (Nolan and Nolan 290). The final destination at Compostela was not the only place that pilgrims could meet a “person”. The Way was lined with shrines and churches that held relics of saints, and Book V of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* goes into detail about whose holy bodies pilgrims should visit along the Camino and why. William Melczer maintains that the route to Compostela must have been for medieval pilgrims “a kind of Broadway of saints, of relics and of reliquaries” (X-XI).

Although some walked the route of this “Broadway of saints” out of civil obligation in order to atone for a crime, and others out of a mix of religious beliefs and the search for adventure, personal anxiety, or other motives, the vast majority of medieval pilgrims had religious motives. They came to honor St. James, to obtain spiritual graces for the soul of a family member, to ask for healing or to give thanks for the saint’s intervention, for example in healing the pilgrim or a family member. Many came to do penance for a serious sin, especially in Holy Years¹⁰, when plenary indulgences were — and still are — given (Singul 75). In addition, the Fathers of the Church such as Augustine, Jerome and Bede wrote about the spiritual “homelessness” of the Christian, whose true home was in Heaven. The entire life of the Christian, then, was a pilgrimage towards that final heavenly home (Nolan and Nolan 3). In

¹⁰ A Holy Year or Jubilee Year occurs when the feast day of St. James, July 25th, falls on a Sunday, which it does every 6, 5, 6 and 11 years. Pope Calixto II was the first to institute observances of Compostelan Holy Years in 1122, under the premise that during these special years the faithful who made the pilgrimage to the apostle’s tomb could receive plenary indulgences for their sins, just as pilgrims to Rome could during Jubilee Years (Mandianes 52-53).

Medieval thinking, the earth was a valley of tears, and worldly suffering was made more bearable by the belief that it would help one to obtain eternal life after death. Such rationale helps us to understand why so many people undertook the long, arduous and dangerous mission of traveling to Compostela.

Legends and propaganda: *Santiago Matamoros*

Of course, the enthusiastic promotion of kings and bishops that I mentioned earlier was motivated not only by leaders' religious devotion. Political motives were also a factor. Many early depictions of St. James show a simple pilgrim, a man on foot with his cloak and hat. This image was adapted to suit the political realities of ninth century Spain. When the apostle's tomb was discovered in the second decade of the 800s, much of Spain —although not the northern strip —had been under Muslim control since the year 711 (Gitlitz and Davidson xiv). In addition, Charlemagne's dream of a united Europe, politically and culturally, had failed to materialize. The Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula had begun, and all of Western Europe perceived Islam as a threat. Francisco Singul maintains that the cultural and moral disorientation of this feudal society, along with the search for new values, were fundamental factors in the creation of a new intercessor for the faithful of Europe in St. James the Greater (61).

The new image of this intercessor for the faithful was one of the saint perched triumphantly atop a white horse with his defeated Muslim opponent underfoot. According to legend, Muslim forces were led into combat by their prophet Mohammed on a charger. Christians, in turn, believed that they had their own divine protector on horseback in the Battle of Clavijo in 844, in which the "Son of Thunder", as St. James is sometimes called, was said to

have miraculously intervened to help the outnumbered Christian forces defeat the Umayyad emir of Córdoba. Legend maintains that the saint appeared to King Ramiro I in a dream, telling the ruler that he would go into battle the following day on a white horse with a shining sword in his hand. Although many historians strongly doubt that the Battle of Clavijo ever took place, the saint became known as *Santiago Matamoros*, or “St. James the Moorslayer” for his intervention in the legendary battle. The warrior-saint became the patron saint of the monarchy, of the entire Peninsula, and of Christian warfare against the Muslims. *Santiago Matamoros* was perceived as a kind of “cabaleiro sobrenatural que axuda ós reinos cristiás na loita contra o islam e na expansion territorial cara ó sur peninsular” (Singul 85). He was also believed to have intervened in the Christian conquest of Coimbra in 1064 (83). In the late 12th century, the Spanish Military Order of Santiago was created with a two-fold purpose: to protect pilgrims, and to “to wage war against the infidels” (Gitlitz and Davidson, xiv). Despite the razing of Santiago de Compostela led by the Umayyad strongman known as Almanzor (i.e., al-Mansur) in 977, in which the church’s bells were carried off to the Umayyad capital of Córdoba, the Umayyads and their successors never completely established themselves in this northwestern corner of the Peninsula, and thus the “Moorslayer” became a perfect symbolic tool to rally the Christian forces against the Muslim majority (Frey 11).

Santiago Matamoros as talisman for the fight against Muslim control on the Iberian Peninsula was thus established, but the Christian territories would also need a more practical mechanism in order to unite. The Asturian-Leonese monarchs found in the phenomenon of the Camino an ideal tool for both of these tasks: a figurehead in the battle against the Muslim forces, and cooperation among the Christian territories. Building an infrastructure for the pilgrimage

route — including bridges, roads, and refuges— required armies, supplies, commerce, and legislation; in a word, progress. As Alfonso G. García Osuna reports in his part pilgrimage account, part historical study:

The myth of Santiago is very closely tied to the building of Spain as a nation, for it provided the ideal and the rallying point around which all Spaniards could gather; the battle cry “Santiago!” could be used by all Spanish warriors in their struggle against the “infidels” and their “Allah”. The myth united and gave direction to a previously disunited and contentious people. (14)

Furthermore, Francisco Singul explains that,

With the invocation to Santiago, presented as the champion of Catholic orthodoxy, the Asturian crown demonstrates an intelligent political vision, linking the defense of the doctrinal purity and the fight against Islam to the very defense of the West. From this perspective, the Asturian kingdom avoids the expansion of heresy and contains Islamic ambitions, which will give Spain a favorable image so that it will be, in the future, the principal location of Western pilgrimage (31).

Santiago de Compostela did in fact become the preferred location of Western pilgrimage by the mid-12th century, with Rome and Jerusalem in second and third places (Coffey, Davidson and Dunn xxix). Walter Starkie points out that unlike Italy, Spain “had to be redeemed from the Infidel”, and therefore the pilgrimage to Compostela “acquired the prestige of a crusade and it was chosen for its unusual difficulty” (61). The Kingdom of Asturias’ armed opposition to the various Muslim polities in the Peninsula was an important part in Compostela’s increasing importance, and thus, “Medieval Europe begins, with the pilgrimage to the West and the devotion to Santiago, an intimate relationship with Christian Spain” (Singul 61). It is important to note that Medieval Europe also began an intimate relationship with Galicia in particular. As

pilgrims from all over the continent made their way to *Jacobsland*, as the region was known in the Early Middle Ages, “Galicia became the last link in a chain which united the Christian towns of northern Spain to consolidate the reconquest” (Valiña Sampedro 211).

The Camino throughout the centuries: the ebb and flow of pilgrims and the evolving perceptions of pilgrimage

Given these religious and political motives, it is hardly surprising that the Middle Ages were the “Golden Age” of Jacobean pilgrimage, particularly the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Singul 9). It is no coincidence that the peak period of pilgrimage was also an era of splendor for Santiago de Compostela. The Galician city, with much help from Diego Gelmírez, its first archbishop from 1100-1140 and probably the most famous historical figure associated with the city as a place of pilgrimage, became a spiritual and cultural center, a type of “new Rome” (62). During this time, Gelmírez ordered the writing of the above-mentioned *Historia Compostelana*, the splendid cathedral was rebuilt in the 1070s, and it was embellished with sculpture and metalwork in the 1130s. The archbishop vigorously promoted Jacobean pilgrimage, as did the powerful Cluny order, which in the Middle Ages built churches, monasteries, and hospitals for pilgrims along the French Road. Santiago de Compostela was named the Metropolitan See in the province, became the archbishop’s seat in the twelfth century, and grew to accommodate the needs of the constant influx of pilgrims. The apostolic city was not only the most important center of Western pilgrimage in these centuries; it also became the most important city in Spain, even rivaling Toledo in political, cultural and ecclesiastical powers, and was the center of the “Europeanization” of Spain (ibid). Galicia also benefited from the reactivation of Atlantic

commerce in these centuries, which put it on the map as an important spot for trade within Europe (Murado 31).

The High Medieval Period, from 1100 to 1399, is also considered the “golden age” of Western European pilgrimage in general. It is during this time that the journeys to the shrine of Saint Thomas Beckett, assassinated in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170, reached peak levels; and the first great Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome took place in 1300 (Nolan and Nolan 95). Estimates vary, and it is impossible to know how many people really travelled the “Milky Way of Stars” to Santiago in these early centuries, but some estimates put the figure at anywhere from 250,000 to 500,000 pilgrims per year by the 12th century (García Osuna 23). The thirteenth century, in addition to the impressive list of kings and saints who made the pilgrimage to Compostela, was also the century of the Crusades and the strengthening of the monarchy in all of Europe, as well as the famous battle of las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. Some years before this decisive battle, in 1195, King Alfonso VIII’s forces had suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Almohads at Alarcos. This prompted Pope Innocent II to proclaim a Crusade, and in 1212, the armies of Castilla, Navarra, Aragón and Portugal traveled south to Andalucía to battle the forces that had been victorious at Alarcos. This time, however, the Almohads suffered a devastating loss, and the battle is regarded as a turning point in the Reconquista. Not long after, the armies of Castilla took several other cities in Southern Spain, thus accelerating the loss of Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula (Cantarino 59). In addition to the enormous historical repercussions of the battle, it also led to pilgrimages on foot by many of its participants, who came from all over Europe (Castrillo Mazeres 49).

The 14th century saw a decline in Jacobean pilgrimages, and Manuel Mandianes Castro claims that the conduct of the Galician *caballeros*, who committed “outrages” against bishops, other religious men and women and institutions that aided pilgrims, was a major factor (41). Galician knights were not the only ones to blame; the pilgrimage began to acquire a “*caballeresco* and aristocratic air” in the 14th and 15th centuries as knights from all over Europe came to Spain to show off their heroic deeds (González López 63). An even larger factor was difficult times in Europe, which included the spread of the devastating Bubonic Plague, religious unrest, and the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between the French and English monarchies (Castrillo Mazeres 53). Although not as numerous as in previous centuries, pilgrims nevertheless continued to flow steadily into the Galician city in the 15th century, and several of them penned accounts of their pilgrimages. Most of those who did so were English, French or German, and were usually clergymen or gentlemen (Singul 205-210). A few of these early accounts that have survived are the *Itinerario de Purchas* (ca.1420), written by one of the numerous English pilgrims in this century, and the *Itinerarium sive peregrinatio* by the doctor Hieronymus Münzer of Nuremberg, who traveled to Santiago at the end of the 15th century (208).

The Renaissance

Among the 15th century pilgrims to Santiago were the Catholic monarchs Isabel and Fernando, who must have had plenty to thank their patron saint *Santiago Matamoros* for when they reached Compostela in 1488. The fall of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada, the last stronghold of Islam on the Peninsula, was only a matter of time, they had unified their kingdoms, and from them they would soon expel another threat to Christian unity: the Jewish population. The

Catholic kings ordered the construction of a new pilgrim hospital next to Santiago's majestic cathedral, which would become the best health center in all of 16th century Europe. Little did they know that there would be far fewer pilgrims to attend to only a few decades after its inauguration in 1509. The Church that they fanatically defended would be shaken to its very core in 1517, when a German priest made public his 95 theses for reform.

The Renaissance era, and the massive schism in Christianity that a dying Martin Luther confessed he never imagined he would provoke the morning he posted his ideas on the door of his Wittenberg church, would mean a departure from the Medieval era of mass pilgrimage to Compostela. The Protestant reformers of northern Europe were generally hostile to pilgrims, and derided the practice of pilgrimage as an external manifestation of false piety (Gitlitz and Davidson 305). Martin Luther, in a 1520 letter to the Christian Nobility of Germany, denounced the “curiosity or devilish delusion” that he saw as the true motives for pilgrims, and accused the popes of fostering such inauthentic pursuits “with their false, feigned, foolish, [Holy Years] by which the people are excited, stirred up, torn away from God's commandments, and drawn toward their own deluded undertakings.” Luther concluded that “all pilgrimages should be given up; for there is in them nothing good— no commandment, no obedience — but, on the contrary, numberless occasions for sin and for the despising of God's commandments” (114). In addition to his condemnation of pilgrimage in general, the German priest attacked the Jacobean pilgrimage specifically for the corruption on the route, which included the so-called *gallofos*, false pilgrims whose sole aim was economic benefit through robbing pilgrims and living off of the charity of others. Luther also criticized the practice of paying others to carry out one's *votos*, as wealthy families often did (Singul 219).

Humanists, with their preoccupation with human interests above purely religious values, were also critical of the pilgrimage, which they claimed had acquired an increasingly festive and folkloric, rather than spiritual, nature. In his *Peregrinatio religionis ergo* (1526), the Augustinian monk and great Humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam questioned what one gains by leaving behind his family and his work to undertake the long route to Santiago, Rome or Jerusalem. Furthermore, says Américo Castro, in the epoch of “the cult of heroic leaders, caudillos” such as Gonzalo de Córdoba and Don Juan de Austria, sixteenth-century Spain began to value human heroes and their personal valor over heavenly heroes like Santiago (188).

By the mid-16th century, the effects of the Reformation could be seen on the pilgrimage. English travel to Santiago came to a halt after the excommunication of Henry VIII in 1537 and the creation of the Anglican Church not long after. Even worse, by 1562, religious wars in France and a general state of chaos across Europe put an end to the religious unity in the Western world and made pilgrim travel between France and Spain rather difficult (Singul 222). Yet, contrary to popular belief, the Reformation was not the “death knell” for all pilgrimages (Dunn and Davidson xxviii). The number of those who came to Santiago did decline, but the so-called Road of Stars still maintained “acceptable” levels of pilgrims during this period (Singul 9). Across Europe, the 1540s saw a slight upswing in pilgrimage, perhaps because of the beginning of the Counter Reformation (the first meetings of the Council of Trent were conducted in this decade) and the dawn of a new age in European pilgrimage (Nolan and Nolan 100). Leaders of the Catholic Reformation also vigorously promoted shrines. David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson speculate that the many visits by English and Irish pilgrims in the 1500s noted in Santiago de Compostela’s cathedral records may indicate that pilgrims found in the Camino an

escape from religious persecution in their own countries, or perhaps a way to atone for their reactions to that persecution (305). Furthermore, waning levels of pilgrimage in Europe fail to indicate the strong devotion that was taking root on the other side of the Atlantic. Spanish conquistadors and settlers took the Catholic religion and their beloved patron saint to the New World, expanding his cult to their new lands, as reflected in the names of cities like Santiago de Chile, Matamoros (Mexico), and many more small towns (Coffey, Davidson and Dunn xxxi).

The Baroque epoch

After the 16th-century decline, the following century, with its Counterreformation agenda and its exaltation of the cult of saints, revived the medieval devotion towards the pilgrimage (Singul 9). Santiago de Compostela's cathedral was renovated and expanded, including the addition of the impressive Baroque façade that exists today. The city of Santiago underwent a number of changes sponsored by the monarchy, including the creation of many new buildings (223-4). In addition, the saint's cult would experience something of a revival when his status as patron saint of Spain was threatened. By the early 17th century there was a movement to replace the apostle with a saint born on Spanish soil, the popular Saint Teresa of Ávila. A great debate and many fiery sermons on either side ensued. Considerable amounts of energy and money were spent on strengthening the cult of St. James, including publications about all aspects of his life, miracles and cult. Francisco de Quevedo, many clergy, and other vigorous defenders of the apostle as patron saint won the battle in 1629, and the fascination with the tales of St. James' miracles spread throughout Europe. This widespread interest led to new representations in music, poetry, drama and art. Confraternities dedicated to St. James sprang up across the continent to

honor the saint and care for pilgrims, all of this strengthening the Western world's devotion to the apostle (xxxi-xxxii).

Along with the revival of the saint's devotion and of the pilgrimage route, however, came increased skepticism about the very reason for the existence of the pilgrimage. After all, there is no proof that the remains buried in Compostela are actually those of St. James, or even that the apostle had ever traveled to the Peninsula at all, let alone evangelize it. Doubts had been voiced about the matter for centuries and grew stronger during the Protestant Reformation and into the seventeenth century. Martin Luther famously stated that no one should bother making the religious journey to Compostela, because "one doesn't know if Saint James lies there, or a dead dog or a dead horse." As far as heightened skepticism in the 17th century in particular, Américo Castro maintains that this period was one in which "there were no longer any Moorish enemies against which to make holy war, and when Spanish religiosity was certainly not what it had been in the tenth and eleventh centuries" (145). Even eminent Catholics counted themselves among the skeptics, such as the great Jesuit historian Juan de Mariana, who in 1601 doubted the authenticity of Santiago's tomb. As a result, many Jesuits were behind the push for St. Teresa of Ávila as the nation's patron saint. St. Julian, bishop of Toledo, was another prominent Catholic skeptic. He did not accept that St. James had even been on Spanish soil, and insisted that he had in fact been in Palestine. Castro notes that before the Muslim invasion in 711, the Church was not interested in fomenting popular beliefs about the saint's evangelization on the Peninsula, but it would drastically change its position in the ninth century after the discovery of the tomb (149).

As if doubts about the sanctity of the tomb were not enough to tarnish the Way's image, the authenticity of pilgrims was also a growing problem. In the 16th to 18th centuries there was

an increase in the number of false pilgrims on the Route due to wars, insecurity, and famines. These vagabonds incorporated a new social class to the route, one that was “más cutre, sucia, ruidosa, festiva, pendenciera, y en suma tropel de pícaros, que so pretexto de ganar jubileo, se jubilaban de la vida honesta para entregarse a los placeres de un licencioso ejercicio nómada” (Sanz Hermida 298). The result, besides the many crimes perpetrated by these falsely pious individuals, was something of a loss of prestige of the pilgrimage. The general vision of the Camino in the literature of the Baroque period, in fact, was tainted with existence of these delinquents, as seen in Tirso de Molina’s *La romera de Santiago*, *El Quijote*, and other works of the Golden Age that related pilgrimages with disdain, especially when carried out by foreigners seeking alms rather than the saint’s graces (246).

The 18th and early 19th centuries

The criticisms of false pilgrimages and delinquency would multiply during the 18th century. In 1723, a Holy Year, there were so many poor (or supposedly poor) pilgrims that the Church, alleging the “great hindrance to pilgrims” decreed a prohibition of almsgiving in the cathedral or in its entranceways, warning that violators could be punished with excommunication and a fine of twenty *ducados* (Castrillo Mazeres 66). In addition, the Enlightenment ushered in the “postreligious age” in Western society. Although the Age of Reason was a period of heightened interest in traveling and learning about other cultures, it also sparked serious debate about the abuses and falsities surrounding the pilgrimage, not to mention the very nature of pilgrimage itself, which was seen in Enlightened thought as a waste of time and therefore a “grave damage for all hard-working and productive societies” (Pombo Rodríguez

21). Popular religiosity was looked down upon, and the cult of the saints was seen as superstitious. The Benedictine friar Benito Jerónimo Feijóo was one of the Enlightened thinkers in Spain who harshly criticized the practice of pilgrimage and *romerías* in general in his *Teatro Crítico Universal* (1765). The Jacobean pilgrimage also lost favor with the Bourbons, who showed little interest in promoting it as past monarchs had (Pombo Rodríguez 20). Nevertheless, says Singul, the Enlightenment was not as much of a blow to Jacobean devotion as some imagine, and Western pilgrimage managed to maintain high levels until the end of the 18th century.

While debate over the nature of pilgrimage and corruption on the Route was not quite enough to halt the masses, the overthrow of the French monarchy and the ensuing political and social upheaval certainly was. The French Revolution in 1789 initiated the largest decline in the pilgrimage's history up to that point, and was further worsened by the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and the War of Independence (Singul 274). There were battles between the French and the Spanish, and even bloody combat in the streets of Santiago. By the end of the War of Independence, in 1814, anything associated with the French provoked suspicion of treason of both Spain and its religion, and was therefore considered anti-patriotic and *afrancesado* (276). Some continued to make the long walk to Compostela in spite of all of these circumstances, but the pilgrimage in the last decades of the 18th century and first decades of the 19th century was only a shadow of what it had been just a few years before (274- 275).

The 19th century

The negative inertia of these years would continue, and the mid-19th century would see the lowest levels of Jacobean pilgrimage in its history. George Borrow, an Englishman who traveled through Galicia in 1837, writes of the celebrated city of Santiago and notes that, “Its glory, however, as a place of pilgrimage is rapidly passing away” (245). His fellow countryman Richard Ford, who traveled Spain in the 1840s, observed that, “Pilgrimage, the oriental and medieval form of travelling is passing away even in Spain. The carcass remains, but the spirit is fled” (v2, 601). Perhaps part of this “fled spirit” had to do with the decline of Jacobean devotion, in part due to the progressive isolation of Spain and the closure of borders, a phenomenon seen across Europe. In addition to the War of Independence there were the Carlist wars, and at the same time the Church lost a great deal of power. In the past, the strength of devotion to St. James and of the spirituality of the pilgrimage had been capable of overcoming serious obstacles to pilgrimage, including political crises, famines, plagues, economic problems and wars, causing Church authorities and the Crown to intervene and facilitate documents that opened borders, as well as the doors of hospitals and charitable houses to true pilgrims. Such was the case in the Baroque period, for example, in spite of wars that plagued Europe and general insecurity and shortage on the Camino.

After the transition from the 18th to the 19th century, however, European history would be quite different from that of the Ancient Regime. The Church’s loss of a great deal of power, especially in Spain, meant the disentailment of Church property. Galicia would be especially hard-hit by this decreased ecclesiastical importance, which did away with monies destined to religious brotherhoods (*cofradias*), monasteries and charitable works, and debilitated the

Compostelan Church with the discontinuation of its revenues from the *Voto de Santiago*¹¹ in 1834 (Singul 277). As a result of this decline, the Galician nobles no longer steered their children toward the priesthood as before, and by the mid-1800s the more humble social classes produced a greater number of priests. The economic and cultural decadence of the Galician clergy was especially pronounced in Santiago, the most clerical of Galician cities, as it lost demographic, economic and political importance to other cities like Vigo and A Coruña (278). These two urban centers, and later Ferrol, surpassed Santiago de Compostela as the most populous cities of Galicia, and A Coruña became the capital of the province in 1821. While these other cities became more industrialized and therefore modernized, Compostela, the city that Picaud had long ago deemed “la más dichosa de España”, remained “a backwater capital crammed with musty monuments, the home of a second-class university and a pilgrimage center whose glory days had passed” (Gitlitz and Davidson 350).

The Apostolic seat’s decreased economic power meant decreased levels of promotion of its pilgrimage. Antón Pombo Rodríguez explains that,

Si la exclaustración de las órdenes regulares no supuso un gravísimo contratiempo para la peregrinación, no se puede decir otro tanto sobre el drástico recorte de los ingresos de la mitra y el cabildo compostelano, y menos aún a propósito de la enajenación de las rentas de los hospitales, incluidos el Real de Santiago o el del Rey en Burgos, en los que eran alojados los peregrinos. La lenta sustitución de la red asistencial cristiana, de origen medieval, por otros centros dependientes del Estado que poco espacio y dedicación ofrecían al peregrino, reducen las opciones de acogida entre las clases populares y los menesterosos. (21-22)

¹¹ A type of “national offering” given to the Galician city each year on the saint’s feast day. The practice is believed to have started after the Battle of Clavijo in 844, and was made official by Felipe IV in 1643. The tradition continues today. For a detailed history, see Huidobro y Serna, et al, pp. 447-481.

As Jacobean pilgrimage became more difficult for most, levels of devotion to St. James's Way fell as they rose for other local and provincial shrines. The political turmoil across Europe in the 18th century (the creation of nation-states, the rise of imperialism, etc.) and the political and economic problems in Spain (the progressive loss of the American colonies, the alternating system of liberal and conservative parties) were also major factors in the all-time low in the number of pilgrims in the 19th century. The ancient Camino, once a pillar of medieval European culture, seemed to be losing its importance in modern society. Singul maintains that people were far less interested in outward manifestations of a devotion that seemed to belong to past eras, when the social order, economic balance and ideological power were largely in the hands of the Church. On a practical level, the new industrial society of the 19th century did not have time for pilgrimages, especially when the trek to Santiago required an average of three months. There are few pilgrims' tales from these years, and a few English journalists' articles from the time reflect the pilgrimage's decadence, including an 1867 article in *Fraser's Magazine* that reported only thirty to forty pilgrims on July 25, the feast of St. James (Singul 278-279). In the first decade of the 21st century, in contrast, the number of pilgrims arriving on the saint's feast day averaged around a thousand each year, and more than double this in non- Holy Years, according to records kept by the Archdiocese of Compostela.

Despite this drastic decline, the 19th century was not all gloom and doom for the ancient Road of Stars. European Romantic culture promoted the study of history and Christian archaeology, materializing in the rediscovery of tombs and the bodies of apostles, saints and martyrs, including St. Francisco, St. Clare, St. Ambrose, and the apostles Phillip and St. James. With its attraction to the “exotic” Middle Ages and the Gothic, European Romanticism greatly

valued the historic pilgrimage and the city of Compostela. There was a certain awakening of an image of Santiago as a historic city of beautiful, ancient buildings that could intrigue tourists and foreigners. These accounts in turn awakened an interest in Jacobean themes in English Romanticism, as seen in Richard Ford's *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home* (1845), the first guidebook since the 12th century *Liber Sancti Jacobi* to mention the Cathedral of Santiago in detail. The Romantics' attention led to an international rediscovery of the importance of the *Pórtico da Gloria*¹² in the Victorian period and a perception of the pilgrimages to Santiago as the “alma de todo aquel máxico mundo medieval” (Singul 280).

The rediscovery of the apostle's tomb and the pilgrimage in the early 20th century

Decades after the height of Romanticism in Spain and its glorification of the past, a monumental finding sparked hopes for a revival of the medieval pilgrimage. Though the apostle's body had been hidden since 1589 due to a fear of the city being sacked by pirate Sir Francis Drake, a team of excavators led by Antonio López Ferreiro rediscovered it under the altar of the cathedral in 1879. The discovery led to studies of the three bodies located underneath the cathedral, which left little doubt that the tomb did indeed hold the same bodies discovered by Teodomiro in the ninth century. All evidence, according to the Church, suggested that St. James the Greater was in fact buried on Galician ground. Such a finding called for celebration, and the year 1880 was declared “Año Santo Extraordinario” (Singul 281). In 1884 Pope Leo XIII made it official with the proclamation of the bull *Deus Omnipotens*, confirming the transfer of the saint's body and the authenticity of his bones. As expected, a new wave of pilgrims and visitors found

¹² The *Pórtico da Gloria* is a Romanic colonnade designed by the *Maestro Mateo* between 1168 and 1188, located on the western façade of the cathedral.

their way to Santiago between 1880 and 1890, bringing with them a newfound religious and cultural prestige for the once splendid city. Around this time a fascination with medieval art was growing, providing another impetus for visits to Santiago (Coffey, Davidson and Dunn, xxxiii). There was a minor popular revival of the Way of St. James, even if the number of foreign pilgrims remained low. However, those who hoped for a true revival following the 1879 discovery could not anticipate the Spanish “crisis” of 1898, the nation at war, and much of Europe entangled in World War I and its disastrous effects, which made a true revival across the continent all but impossible (Singul 10-11). Soon to follow were the 1929 stock market crash and its effects worldwide, Spain’s own political turmoil followed by its Civil War, the devastation that World II would unleash across an already war-scarred Europe, and the tensions of the Cold War. The Archbishops of Galicia continued to promote the Jacobean cult in the late 19th and early-to-mid-20th centuries, but all of these events made most of the 20th century “un campo espiritual moi difícil de sementar” (11). Georgianna Goddard King, an American Art History professor who made the pilgrimage on horseback and partially on foot in 1920, observed that “Few pilgrims go to Santiago now, and those who travel, use the train” (v2, 402). She remarked that it was only among the ancient stones of centuries-old monasteries and churches that there still remained “the memory, lost among men, of the perpetual pilgrim train” (v2, 418). The scholar and her Spanish guide were hard-pressed to find lodging during much of their journey along the Route, evidence that the numbers of pilgrims had dwindled enough as to no longer require an infrastructure for them.

Such low numbers are not surprising. Making a pilgrimage to the northwest corner of Spain could hardly have been a priority or even so much as an afterthought for most Europeans

in the aftermath of World War I, the Great Depression, and later the deprivation that followed World War II. While postwar Europe experienced shortages across the board during the 1940s, Spaniards suffered even more than her neighbors, and historians Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi maintain that “it was the *absolute* level of hardship that distinguished Spain. Per capita income had been cut by nearly one-fifth compared with 1936” (52). Given the dire situation, governments and other public powers dealing with these crises lacked resources to devote to phenomena like the Camino. The three-volume study of Vázquez de Parga, Lacarra y Uría¹³ from 1948 states in the introduction that its purpose is to study “*lo que fueron* las peregrinaciones a Santiago de Galicia” (5, italics mine). The three authors trace the pilgrimage through the centuries in careful detail, but stop at the end of the 19th century, leaving out the near half-century before they compose their study. They speak of a few late-19th century pilgrims as “el final de una estirpe histórica que circuló por todos los caminos de Europa y que hoy [1948] ha quedado reducida a estampa turística de la ciudad de Santiago y sus alrededores” (Vázquez de Parga et al., v1, 118). In *Santiago y Compostela en la Historia* (1977) Fray Justo Pérez de Urbel echoes this sentiment, lamenting that no one does the Camino any longer and speaking of it as a thing of the past.

However, it is not true that “no one” did the Camino in the early 1900s — we will later see examples — and other scholars claim that the authors of Franco’s prized study, among others, exaggerated the pilgrimage’s decadence. Antón Pombo Rodríguez, who has written extensively on the Camino, insists that Jacobean pilgrimage never died completely. The author

¹³ This study was a recipient of the “Premio Francisco Franco” awarded to the best studies on the pilgrimage. It was a runner-up to Huidobro y Serna’s study, discussed below.

points to the 1867 *Fraser's Magazine* article mentioned previously, in which J.B. Bouchain claims that there were only thirty or forty pilgrims in Compostela on the saint's feast day. Pombo Rodríguez points out that pilgrims had modernized and modified their aspect with the times; therefore, it was no longer as evident that one was a pilgrim, and there could have been many more who Bouchain did not identify as pilgrims. Another difficulty in researching late 19th-century pilgrimages is that studies of the time are based on limited documents, primarily on the registries from the *Hospital Real* (Pombo Rodríguez 23). As a result, many studies from the first half of the 20th century relied on these incomplete documents, as well as on comments such as J.B. Bouchain's article, mentioned above, and erroneously declared the end of an era. It would be more accurate, however, to say that it was virtually the end of the era of pilgrimages on foot. Trains¹⁴ and later buses provided a much easier and quicker way to reach Santiago, and therefore became the common modes of transportation for the drastically reduced number of pilgrims in the mid 20th century, a “cómoda devoción” that scholars of the Camino like Luciano Huidobro y Serna strongly denounced (v1, 241). Even if the tradition of pilgrimage on foot had been lost — it was not until the 1980s that it would become popular again — the religious-touristic current was thus kept alive (Singul 285).

Franco's promotion of the Camino

Just as the pilgrimage never died out completely, it also never ceased to serve motives other than those of individual pilgrims. Gitlitz and Davidson explain that, “In the ideological

¹⁴ The first railroad line arrived in Galicia in 1873. Some pilgrims began to take advantage of this new mode of transportation for a quicker, easier pilgrimage (Pombo Rodríguez 29).

battles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when traditional Catholic Spain felt itself threatened by the twin forces of modernization and secularization, the pilgrimage became a kind of symbol of the link between Catholicism and Spain’s destiny” (350). It is hardly surprising, then, that Francisco Franco would use this symbolism for his agenda of restoring national Catholicism. In 1938, the leader reinstated St. James as the patron of Spain, declared the year “Año santo extraordinario”, and reinstalled the centuries-old *Voto de Santiago*, which had been nullified during the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 (Frey 238). After the Spanish Civil War, when the Camino was reopened as a peaceful zone, the *Generalísimo* “pumped funds into making Compostela a showpiece of Catholic Spain” (Gitlitz and Davidson 350). One of the ways of doing so was to announce a contest in 1943, in honor of St. James’ martyrdom 1,900 years earlier, for the best study — historical, artistic, geographic, medical or literary — on Jacobean pilgrimage. The winner of this contest, Luciano Huidobro y Serna, along with his research team, compiled the three volume study *Las peregrinaciones jacobinas* (1949-51). Besides containing a vast amount of information on the pilgrimage, these volumes also demonstrate the motives of the Franco regime’s promotion of the pilgrimage. The motto of Huidobro y Serna’s study is “Volvamos a Santiago”, which, as the author explains, “deseamos todos los devotos del Apóstol, como buenos patriotas, sea expresión del programa que proponemos a los españoles para conseguir de nuevo la grandeza de nuestra nación” (v1, 1). The study expressly states its goals of discover the nation’s past and returning to its “glorious traditions” (3).

Antón Pombo Rodríguez explains that, “El culto jacobeo y la peregrinación habían quedado atrapados, y así iban a permanecer hasta mediado el siglo, en la maraña propagandística y maniquea del Régimen; esta circunstancia va a provocar la deserción, por parte del bando

derrotado, de la causa santiaguista” (33). In this “religious restoration”, instituted under the formula for National Catholicism, the pilgrimages acquire an obvious political label, and are organized largely by the army, the Falange, Acción Católica, Las Juventudes Católicas, and other groups associated with the regime (*ibid.*). Franco appeared several times with these groups in front of the cathedral doors to make the *ofrenda nacional*. In 1948, a Holy Year, the World Youth Pilgrimage to Santiago was organized and continued in the 1950s and 1960s to honor the Church and the Spanish state (Frey 239). It was in the early 1960s that Franco, through the Ministry of National Education, established the Camino as a *conjunto histórico-artístico* (historic and artistic entirety), setting up its own board of trustees under the protection of the state, and effectively recognizing the Camino’s patrimony. The 1965 Holy Year provided an excellent opportunity to promote the Camino, and Franco’s government did so vigorously. There was a political and religious effort to celebrate the occasion with expositions, articles, advertisements, and reproductions of documents from the 16th and 17th centuries. Manuel Fraga Iribarne, former minister of Information and Tourism (and later president of the Xunta de Galicia), promoted tourism related to the Camino, and began to improve its roads and infrastructure as well as preserve its monuments, particularly around the Holy Years of 1965 and 1971 (Frey 241). Fraga also implemented the *parador* system, one of which is the famous Hostal de los Reyes Católicos in Santiago.

All of the promotion seemed to have been effective, as a reported 109,500 pilgrims arrived at the city’s cathedral in the first four months alone of 1965 (Dunn and Davidson xxxiii). During every Holy Year after the postwar years, pilgrims traveled to Santiago from Galicia and other parts of Spain, although virtually none came from elsewhere (Singul 284). Significantly

lower numbers of pilgrims arrived in non-Holy Years, however, and as the dictator's health waned, so did promotion of the Camino. Dunn and Davidson estimate that a mere seventy pilgrims completed the route in 1979, whereas in 1993, amidst the full revival of the Way, there were 99,000 pilgrims (others say there were over 100,000). Gitlitz and Davidson, who walked the Camino in the 1970s and again multiple times in the decades to follow, stated that, "To most people in the 1970s the pilgrimage Road was hardly more than a vague memory of a historical relic" (xi). The refuges crowded with pilgrims in the 1993 Holy Year did not yet exist for pilgrims in the 1960s and 1970s, leaving them to rely on barns, church floors, abandoned school rooms, fields, monasteries, or the occasional hospitable townspeople that might let pilgrims sleep on their porch or in an extra room (Frey 251).

The path to rebirth: What led up to the revival of the Camino in the late 20th century

Although the chatter of pilgrims along the once bustling roads had grown nearly silent, the rich cultural history of which these pilgrims were a part was enough to generate plenty of noise among scholars in the first part of the 20th century. Studies like those published on Santiago's cathedral in 1926 by Harvard archaeologist John Kenneth Conant, or others by the *Instituto de Estudios Galegos Padre Sarmiento (CSIC)*, ensured that the Camino still received international attention, thus helping to pave the way for the explosion of interest that the end of the century would see (Singul 286). In the late 1920s and early 1930s an American scholar, Walter Muir Whitehill, spent several summers completing the tedious task of transcribing the *Codex Calixtinus*, the publication of which was an enormous aid to scholars of the Camino who until then had had no access to any *Liber Sancti Jacobi* manuscript. Maryjane Dunn and Linda

Kay Davidson also considered that the work of two scholars from the English-speaking world “changed drastically the way of describing the Route” (xxxii). American Art History professor Georgianna Goddard King published *The Way of St. James* in 1920, whose three volumes included iconographic and architectural studies as well as history and her opinions on the Spanish character, countryside and peoples.

Even more important, say Dunn and Davidson, was Walter Starkie’s *The Road to Santiago* (1957), a book which “ushered in a new age of pilgrimage and reinvented the Route of the Milky Way, as many travelers now know it” (xxxii). The authors explain that his account seems “medieval” in his call to others to return to a higher, more spiritual and devout plane of pilgrimage, instead of the comfortable “pampered” pilgrims that go by bus and train on touristy “pilgrimages without tears” that he saw in the 1950s (Starkie 323). Elías Valiña Sampedro, a priest in the village of Cebreiro, also was an important figure in the rebirth of the Camino. He published a short guide to the route in 1971, the final version of which, *El Camino de Santiago: Guía del Peregrino* (1985), became a model for many later guides. Valiña Sampedro did much more to reanimate the Camino and care for pilgrims, as did many other priests (Frey 249). The University of Santiago, through studies in various departments, would also be instrumental in the investigation of the millennium-old pilgrimage. In addition, archaeological excavations of the city’s cathedral conducted in the 1940s and 1950s resulted in new discoveries of considerable importance (Singul 287). *Compostellanum*, the rectory of Santiago’s academic journal, was published in 1956, and the *Centro de Estudios Jacobeos* was founded a few years later to focus on the cult of St. James and its rich history (Frey 240). Scholarly interest alone, however, was not the only reason behind the enormous revival of the pilgrimage in the 1980s and 1990s. In

Chapter 2, I will consider a wide variety of factors that affected Spain, and in turn Galicia and the Camino, in the second half of the 20th century.

Chapter 2: The Transformation of 20th-Century Spanish Society

After decades of political turmoil, civil war, hunger, uncertainty and isolation, Spain's fate would shift directions in the second half of the 20th century. Although the most visible transformations to the rest of the world would come about as a result of Francisco Franco's death, change was brewing on many fronts long before November 1975.

One of these significant transformations in Spain was a gradual move away from international isolation, which dated back to the country's civil war. The war had provoked an unprecedented economic recession. In 1940, the national income had fallen to that of 1914, but due to an increase in population, the per capita income actually fell to 19th century levels (Carr 739). The Spanish economy was in need of reconstruction, and the Franco regime went about the task with economic policies based on Fascist models: Spain would produce what it needed within its own borders, regulate industry, control wages, and cut itself off from the outside world. Carr explains that, "Autarky was the reflection in economic policy of paranoia in politics; for Spain, surrounded by a conspiring hostile world, autarky was presented as a patriotic necessity" (740). Spain chose autarky not only with its post-war economic policies, but also with its political and military decisions while the rest of Europe, and the United States, were at war. In early 1946, the three major Western powers- France, the United States and Great Britain-condemned Spain in a tripartite statement, acknowledging that Franco's government had been founded with the help of

Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The General Assembly of the United Nations recommended withdrawal of their ambassadors to Spain, and for the next four years most nations maintained very limited diplomatic relations with the Iberian country. The UN-sponsored trade boycott meant that Spain's receipt of aid from the Marshall Plan, a large-scale economic program designed to help re-build a devastated post-war Europe, was unthinkable (Liedtke 231-234). The policies that the Francoist regime saw as a “patriotic necessity” translated to the lack of basic necessities for most Spaniards. The regime’s insistence on self-sufficiency cut Spain off from the foreign loans it desperately needed to import capital goods necessary to rebuild its industry. Interventionism led to corruption, black market trade, and ultimately, misery. The decade of the 1940s in Spain is often referred to as the “years of hunger” in which there was very little production and very little consumption. Historian Raymond Carr explains that semi-starvation was a reality for many Spaniards, who were only saved from full-blown starvation by economic aid from Argentine president Juan Perón (740-41). The suffering continued for most Spaniards into the early 1950s, by which time the economy of autarky was in crisis.

The timing for an improvement in international relations, therefore, could not have been better. Despite prior reluctance to associate with a Fascist ruler, the deterioration of the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union, along with the growing attraction of Spain as a strategic location in Europe in the case of a future conflict on the continent, made President Harry Truman and his military advisors rethink their decision to isolate Franco. Meanwhile, the Spanish government lobbied against the UN trade boycott and was successful in having it lifted in 1950. Then in 1953, after years of US deliberation on relations with Spain, the two countries signed agreements to allow US military bases in Spain in return for military aid around \$600

million, and economic aid of nearly \$500 million. Although this aid was certainly important for Spain in its difficult “years of hunger”, perhaps even more significant is the fact that the Madrid Agreements of 1953 effectively welcomed the Iberian nation back to the international economy. In fact, France, Italy, Germany, and Great Britain all resumed military cooperation with Spain within the same year (Liedtke 233-238). The Vatican also signed a concordat with Spain in 1953, another step in the country’s move away from isolation.

Foreign aid did help the struggling economy, albeit temporarily. Between 1954 and 1957 industrial production nearly doubled, while agriculture’s contribution to the national income shrank from 40% in 1951 to 25% in 1957 (Carr 742-43). Even so, the Spanish economy was still in crisis in the mid-1950s. Growing industry meant a growing need for imports, but by 1957, a nation on the verge of bankruptcy could not finance these imports. Foreign exchange was running out, and high rates of inflation (12% in 1958) ate into the value of wages, which dropped to 35% of what they had been before the country’s Civil War (Balfour 268). The drastic drop in real wages caused unrest and unleashed massive strikes — then illegal — throughout Spain.

The technocrats and a new economic policy

As the decade of the 1950s drew to a close, Spain’s *caudillo* could not ignore the problems that plagued the nation. Growing social unrest and an economy teetering on the verge of bankruptcy left the dictator with little choice other than to abandon his dream of self-sufficiency and begin to open the Spanish economy to the outside world. The “ministerial reshuffle” in February of 1957 set the wheels in motion for this change by introducing a team of technocrats into government, resulting in new policies that moved towards a liberalization of the

economy (Carr and Fusi 53). The technocrats were typically distinguished professionals in the fields of academia or business who came from well-to-do families and were part of, or at the very least sympathized with, the ultra-Catholic *Opus Dei*. Their objective was to open up the economy to the boom of the West “without political, cultural or social liberation”, driven by the belief that economic growth, along with the increase in living standards it would cause, would be enough to sustain the regime (Balfour 269).

The technocrats’ 1959 Stabilization Plan had two major outcomes. First, they did achieve their goals of reducing public expenditure, lifting restrictions on imports, offering incentives for exports, and opening up to foreign investment, thus moving towards integration in the capitalist economy of the West (Carr and Fusi 53-55). On the other hand, the second major result of the plan was less promising; it turned the peseta into a convertible currency, which cut its value in half, and initially intensified the recession that had begun in 1958. Credit was restricted and real earnings were cut drastically, causing massive lay-offs and high levels of unemployment, which would have soared even more if so many Spaniards had not gone abroad to look for work in these difficult years. Between 1960 and 1972, roughly 552,000 Spaniards moved to Germany in search of work, while 577,000 headed to Switzerland and another 436,000 hoped to find employment in France (Juliá 185). By the 1960s, the government stopped trying to resist, and actually began to assist, the flow of its citizens abroad by setting up government agencies to aid in the process. Raymond Carr considers this action “one of the most dramatic changes in the official vision of an ideal Spanish society” (751).

Opposition to the regime

We have already discussed the first major transformation in the Spain of the late 1950s. The labor strikes that began with the economic crises of the 1950s were part of another essential motor for change; the organization of the opposition to the dictatorship, which began slowly, but continuously, in the mid-1950s. Rebuilding a civil society was a slow process that “began with the emergence of small bubbles of liberty that began to develop on the margins of the regime” (Aguilar 305). Workers, especially the unions of the Workers’ Commissions (*Comisiones Obreras*) were a very important part of the opposition, and formed a “new” labor movement based on wage claims and working conditions, as the established pre-war workers’ organizations had been destroyed (Riquer i Permanyer 269). A well-known and important strike started in early 1957 in the mines of Asturias, also the site of a 1934 revolution that ended with violent repression, and spread to the industrial centers of the country. The Workers’ Commissions were successful in winning important concessions over pay and working conditions in the early 1970s after strikes in several locations, including Ferrol, Vigo, Bilbao, Barcelona and Madrid (ibid).

University students, organized by the Spanish Union of University Students (SEU), were another visible force in the opposition, especially in the late 1960s. The SEU had formerly been dominated by the Falange, but in the second half of the 20th century, the once elitist institutions of the universities became mass institutions. The students’ constant demonstrations, sit-ins, and other types of protest, sometimes violent, denounced the lack of democracy and the poor conditions of university life. Their protests even culminated in the declaration in 1969 of a state of emergency throughout the country. The regime harshly repressed the protestors, in turn provoking widespread solidarity among the population, since the vast majority of students came

from middle-class families (Balfour 271). Other groups also began to publicly manifest their disapproval of the regime, including Christian Democrats, liberals, socialists, communists, and monarchists; the latter group was disappointed by Franco's refusal to install Don Juan, the son of Alfonso XIII, as monarch (268).

Even more indicative of a weakening regime were the first real stirrings of opposition from the very foundations upon which Franco's government was built. Tensions grew among the Falange and the military, and voices of dissent arose from within the Catholic Church. From the years of national Catholicism in the 1940s, when "It was the blessing of the Church, confirmed in the Concordat of 1953, not the ideology of the Falange, that sanctioned- almost sanctified- Franco's rule to the average Spaniard in the 1940s and after" to the 1970s, the Church underwent a metamorphosis (Carr and Fusi viii). Progressive Spanish priests began to speak out against the economic policies of the regime, specifically when the Stabilization Plan of 1959 resulted in the widespread suffering of the working classes. Cardinal Herrera and other advocates for social justice within the Church attacked the plan's lack of protection for the most needy, including its failure to provide social services and adequate housing for the working classes (Carr 748). Then the Second Vatican Council opened in 1962, and the close relationship between Church and state —the government paid clergy's salaries, Franco's control over appointing bishops, the congruence of Spanish law with the teachings of the Church, etc. —began to change. To cite one example of dissidence, as well as distance from the State, the Council's meeting led to the reversal of the prohibition of legal status of religions other than Catholicism in Spain. Belfour explains that,

From the most ardent defender of the regime, the church became an outspoken critic from within, spurred on not just by the change in world Catholicism after the Second Vatican Council but also by the radicalization of its lay organizations and urban priests. In 1971 the church voted to ask forgiveness from the Spanish people for its role in the Civil War, and in 1973 the bishops asked for the separation of the church and the state. (270)¹⁵

Liberal Vatican II priests “balked at the public displays of Franco’s National Catholicism”, which were an embarrassment (Frey 243). The Council planned a more liberal and more tolerant course for the Spanish Church, much to the chagrin of authoritarian Catholics and Franco himself. Pope John XXIII also published two encyclical letters, the first on social justice (*Mater et magistra*, 1961) and the second on human rights (*Pacem in terris*, 1963). Both letters outlined the Church’s vision of a just Christian society, one that included rights such as that of association and freedom of speech, and a fair distribution of wealth among the members of a society. The Pope’s vision of a Christian society looked nothing like Spanish society under Franco (Lannon 278-9).

Paloma Aguilar explains that many young priests whose parishes were located outside of large cities were far more liberal than the generation before them; “This first-hand experience of social reality, along with their belonging to a new generation, made these priests open to political militancy and solidarity with the political parties and neighbourhood organizations that undertook collective protests during the 1970s” (306). Not only priests, but also bishops, publicly spoke out against Francoism. Nationalist organizations in Cataluña and the Basque Country who opposed the regime could often count on the support of leading local leaders in the Catholic

¹⁵ Franco never fully accepted the Council’s petition, refusing to give up his right to appoint bishops. King Juan Carlos did so in 1976.

Church. The same was true for trade unionists. A survey of Spanish clergy carried out in 1966 revealed that eighty percent of priests under the age of forty-five disapproved of the episcopate, rating their leadership as “extremely poor” (Riquer i Permanyer 266). Lay Catholic associations also played a role in the opposition, especially *Juventud Obrera Católica* (JOC, Young Catholic Workers) and *Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica* (HOAC, Catholic Action Workers’ Brotherhoods). These groups combined spirituality with labor activism and defended employees in industry, criticized employers’ policies, and assumed many roles that independent trade unions, illegal under Francoism, usually assumed (Lannon 279).

Opposition from the Church was a clear sign of cracks in the regime, but the resurgent regional nationalism, especially in the Basque country and Cataluña (Galicia always had a much weaker nationalist movement) would present an entirely different challenge for Franco’s government. Catalan nationalism, explains Sebastian Balfour, “was seen as a modernizing and democratic project linked to European models, as opposed to the archaic and repressive nationalism of the Franco regime. On the fringes of Basque nationalism, on the other hand, there was a more xenophobic ideology” that was largely a result of heavy migration into the region (271). Another key difference between the two was that Catalan nationalism usually found expression in overtly political forms that could be more easily repressed, whereas Basque nationalism, “though less politically developed, proved more resilient, cocooned inside Church and family” (Elorza 332). From 1959, regional protest in the Basque Country manifested itself in a radical and violent manner through the extremist nationalist organization ETA (*Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Freedom), an issue that I will revisit later in this chapter.

Artists and intellectuals had always been critical of the regime, and Carr notes that “by the mid-fifties it was apparent that intellectual autarky had died with economic autarky. While the repressive apparatus remained *in situ* to prevent the public emergence of an alternative culture, its efforts to impose its own culture had failed” (767). Social poets, dramatists and novelists like Luis Martín-Santos and Gabriel Celaya “aimed to give ‘silent people’ a voice in a nation ‘idiotized by the press’”, even though only a minority read their work (*ibid*). By 1966, the *Ley Fraga* (named after then-Minister of Information and Tourism Manuel Fraga Iribarne), a press law that relaxed censorship, meant that previously banned films and books could be seen and read legally in Spain for the first time (768). Fraga’s law meant the dismantling of the previous formal procedures for censorship, in which a paper was required to submit its pages to a censor before it could be published (Gemie 118). The new law did not, however, do away with censorship altogether, and journalists and newspapers were still fined or sanctioned if they were considered to be hostile to the regime. Nevertheless, the press was occasionally able to report a corruption scandal or another affair that implicated members of the government (Riquer i Permanyer 268).

The numerous groups that spoke out against the dictatorship in the 1950s and 60s were not able to organize a centralized opposition that would create a viable alternative to the Franco regime, partly because of their disparate agendas, and partly because of the difficulty of mobilizing the middle classes. Most of the middle class, even if they did not support the regime, did not openly oppose it, a phenomenon that Santos Juliá calls “fascismo por consenso” (201). Most Spaniards, adds Carr, lived in a “culture of evasion, which was to become the mass culture of consumer society in the 1970s” (766). Despite this lack of involvement, and despite the fact

that officially the dictatorship would last another two decades after the first strong signs of discord had appeared, the opposition's attacks had begun to chip away at the regime's moral authority. Spaniards knew that their country had to change.

The 1960s “boom”

Opposition to the regime was not the only force that grew throughout the decade of the 1960s. Despite the recession accelerated by the 1959 Stabilization Plan, Spain's “economic miracle” was in full swing by 1961. It was a decade of progress, a pre-transition period in which Spain opened up to the rest of the world and began to move “away from repression and toward democracy” (Gies 3).¹⁶ Part of this new openness was the government's abolition in 1959 of the visa requirements for tourists from Western Europe, setting the stage for the tourist industry that had grown throughout the 1950s to truly take off —and take off it did. As over a million Spaniards packed their bags and headed to Europe in search of jobs, millions of foreigners packed their swimsuits and headed to Spain for seaside vacations. Between the late 1950s and 1972, the number of visitors to Spain jumped from around one million to thirty-four million annually (Carr 746). By 1978, the number had climbed to forty million. As can be expected, the earnings from the growing tourism industry also skyrocketed, from \$129 million in 1959 to \$919 million in 1963 (Balfour 269). Sleepy coastal towns became booming tourist hot spots with high-rise buildings, seemingly overnight. Spain's “boom” was a result of more than just facilitating the entrance of foreign tourists, of course. It was largely a result of an economic boom across the

¹⁶ It was not until admission into the European Union (1986) and other organizations that Spain was more fully integrated into Europe, however.

continent in the 1960s. Europeans, northern ones especially, prospered and could afford trips to Spain's sunny beaches, where they took advantage of the cheap *peseta*.

Inexpensive vacations on the coast were not all that appealed to outsiders; Spain was also attractive for foreign investors because of its low labor costs, potential for expansion, and government subsidies (Balfour 269). An important part of Spain's economic recovery was the result of a boom in foreign investment, which reached nearly \$5,980 million by 1973 and accounted for 25% of total investment. This European prosperity also meant that the Spaniards working abroad received higher wages than they could have at home, allowing many to send home at least a third of their income. Between 1960 and 1974, these mostly temporary emigrants sent over seven billion dollars back to their families in Spain, enough to finance more than half of the nation's trade deficit (Juliá 185). These remittances, along with foreign capital from tourism and foreign investment, allowed Spain to import machinery, raw materials, technology and energy resources, therefore contributing significantly to the country's industrialization (Riquer i Permanyer 260). Paychecks and tourists flowed into the country, as did another breed of newcomers: multinational firms like Chrysler and Westinghouse, and modern products like television sets and household appliances. Many scholars speak of the modernization of Spain in this period, although historian Santos Juliá insists that, "What defines the decade of the 1960s is not the beginning of the process of modernization, but rather the resumption of a history paralyzed by a victorious political plan at the end of the Civil War" (Juliá 186).

The boom thus initiated Spain's integration into the capitalist economy of the West. In fact, the growth rate of the Spanish economy in the 1960s was exceeded in the capitalist world only by that of Japan (Carr and Fusi 49). Growth in industrial output between 1960 and 1970 was

the fastest in the world, at 10.5% per year, and real industrial wages increased by 40% in these same years (Riquer i Permanyer 262). Between 1960 and 1972, the income of every employed Spaniard increased threefold; Spain had, in a very short time, shed its status as a developing nation to become a “*relatively* affluent society” (Carr 746-47).¹⁷ As a result, while many Spanish children born in the late 1930s and early 1940s grew up with ration cards and hunger pangs, their children born in the 1960s would likely have a television set and little first-hand experience of hunger. Their families might even own a car, since in the 1960s, car ownership increased from 1 in 100 to 1 in 10 by the end of the decade. Franco had long promoted his country with the slogan “Spain is different”, and Carr and Fusi insist that in 1939, with its agrarian economy, Spain really *was* different from its neighboring countries. By 1977, however, “an austere pre-industrial society” had become an industrial society, no longer so different from her neighbors (49). If something was peculiar about Spain, it was “the celerity and abruptness of the jump into modernity after forty years of official, traditional Catholic conservatism; the cultural shock of the sudden end of the *atraso*, that social and cultural lag which has so long obsessed Spanish thinkers” (viii). Indeed, by the time the *años de desarrollo* (years of development) had ended in 1973—two years before the dictator’s death—Spain had become the world’s ninth industrial power.

¹⁷ The emphasis on *relatively* is Carr’s, and he later explains that, while Spanish wages approached European levels, the issue is a “controversial and complicated” one. He provides the example of an industrial worker who participated in an important strike in 1977. As a result, the worker’s wife said that she had to give up using detergent and go back to washing clothes with soap and water. Carr’s comment that, “This was the reply of a working-class wife in a consumer society of relative abundance” underlines the fact that although it had come a long way since the 1940s, calling Spain “prosperous” in the 1970s was still relative.

Not surprisingly, this economic growth transformed society. In a short time, Spain went from “an agrarian society with an industrial appendage” to “an industrial society with an agrarian appendage” (Carr 755). The change was so rapid that in just two decades, the occupational structure of Spain changed more than it had in the previous one hundred years (Carr and Fusi 79). Several scholars are quick to point out that, despite the changes made by Franco’s government in the late 1950s, the drastic economic change and process of modernization was not a direct result of any of the dictatorship. Borga de Riquer i Permanyer, for example, says that these changes

should be seen as the consequence of pressures and conditions at home and abroad, beyond the control of the Francoist authorities. The conjuncture with a period of unparalleled growth in the western world was the principal external factor, and to this should be added the pressure from and capacity of Spanish society to emerge from the isolation and underdevelopment brought about by the Franco regime’s autarkic fantasy. This made the growth of the Spanish economy incoherent to the point of chaos, prone to sharp imbalances, tensions, and deficits. And it was these tensions and inadequacies which created conditions for the growth of new and significant mass movements, whose increasingly politicized action would undermine the regime’s prestige and solidity, rendering its continuation inconceivable after Franco’s death in 1975. (259-60)

The survival of the “Two Spains”

As I stated above, Spain had become part of the capitalist West, for better or for worse. We have seen the significantly better part of this reality, but the “worse” is that not all Spaniards enjoyed a piece of the proverbial pie. Spain’s newfound wealth certainly was remarkable, but it was also unequally distributed. The sudden, unplanned economic growth was concentrated in

areas of the country where industry had traditionally been located, such as Madrid, the Basque Country, Cataluña, Zaragoza and Valencia (Balfour 269). Tourism dollars were spent along the sunny coasts of the south and the east, not along Spain's Atlantic coast. Both of these phenomena meant that the rest of the regions, particularly those that were already stricken by poverty, would see greater numbers of their poor farmers abandon the countryside to look for industrial jobs in the cities. These regions include Andalucía, which lost 843,000 residents in the 1960s; Galicia, which lost 229,000 residents; and the regions of the *meseta* –Castilla-La Mancha (450,000), León (450,000), and Extremadura (378,000). The move away from an agrarian society had left far fewer people in rural Spain, once considered the “moral reserve of the nation” (Carr 751). Without counting children under the age of ten, over 4.5 million Spaniards changed their residence during the 1960s, and over half of this number (2.6 million) moved from their home province to another (Juliá 185). As population shifted, so did power. With the proliferation of agricultural management and the emergence of new elites with ties to industry and finance, the landowner class that had been the main social support of the dictatorship lost both political power and social prestige (188).

As a result of this important redistribution of population, the industrial triangle in Madrid-Barcelona-Vizcaya grew, as did areas with sea ports. Spanish cities became overcrowded as hundreds of thousands of emigrants flowed in, many of them living in hastily built housing with inadequate public services; public authorities were incapable of handling the increased demands, and there simply were not enough schools, medical facilities and other services for this swelled population. The countryside was simultaneously and rapidly depopulated, contrary to the Franco regime's exaltation of rural life. A pharmaceutical salesman in Galicia complained to a

Spanish pilgrim in 1965 of this phenomenon, dubbing it “a modern disease” by the name of “urbitis” (Vizcaíno 314). This modern disease of dramatic migration led to another modern reality; the creation of “the Spain of deserted villages” (Carr and Fusi 68). Madrid became “the metropolis of a deserted Castile”, and over 700,000 from Andalucía alone moved to Barcelona. The first waves of emigrants generally found jobs in the cities that were similar in standing to those that they had held in the countryside: day laborers in the fields became day laborers in construction, or unskilled industrial workers. Nevertheless, many of those who emigrated with hopes of a better life for themselves and for their children did often have the opportunity to climb the ladder, or to at least watch their children climb the ladder, and to hold skilled jobs with better pay (Juliá 190). With the decline of the agricultural sector, the urban working class became the largest and probably the most powerful class in Spain (Carr 758). Not only the size and importance, but also the make-up of this group had changed. Half of the burgeoning middle class was composed of white-collar workers in skilled and service sectors. Some were technicians with university degrees who worked as managers or administrators in the financial and service sectors, but there was also a new working class composed of young people, mostly of rural origin. These young, rural workers, who tended to have few professional qualifications and little political or trade union background, worked in the new industries or the service sector and lived in the so-called dormitory suburbs of large metropolitan areas (Riquer i Permanyer 265). Although they were generally part of the lower middle class, they enjoyed an easier life than many of their parents had in rural villages or in manual labor.

Those who made their living in rural Spain, on the other hand, may have been less optimistic about their opportunities. As the number of workers in the public sector doubled, the

percentage of the agricultural workforce fell from 42% of the population in 1960 to just 20% in 1976, and the rural population was cut in half (Riquer i Permanyer 262). Carr called rural Spain of the 1960s and '70s "the poor relation of the new industrial Spain" (750). Workers in the industrial regions could afford to buy television sets and the other consumer goods that new industries brought to Spain, but most agricultural workers could not permit such luxuries, as they earned only 40 % of the average wage. In 1970, 70 % of households in Madrid had a television set, but some two hundred kilometers away, in the province of Soria, the number dropped to only 11% (747-49). While Spanish agriculture would see improvements in this period, changing patterns in farming benefitted the more substantial owners, and those who owned smaller plots found it even more difficult to make a living. Economic development created "a race of *kulaks* and a proletariat of subsistence farmers", as few could afford to modernize with tractors, artificial fertilizers, and new market crops that required less labor. Rather than improve the quality of farmers' lives, modernization and the use of machines gave them more reasons to start a new life elsewhere (752). In fact, Carr maintains that "the Spanish system was the most socially unjust in Europe; it was regressive with 65% of total revenue coming from indirect taxes which lay heavy on the poorer classes. It was not only that it was socially unjust. The Spanish state, as in the nineteenth century, was poor" (749). The historian points to the political structure, too closely integrated with the business world and dependent on the support of the middle class, as the major flaw in Franco's political economy. Borja de Riquer i Permanyer agrees that the working class suffered "extreme exploitation" and points out that a worker in Spanish industry in 1969 worked an average of 55 hours per week, compared to an average of 44 hours for workers in the rest of Europe, yet the Spanish worker earned just half of the European

average (264). Meanwhile, the upper classes enjoyed the lowest tax levels in all of Europe. In addition to an unjust system, the newly industrialized economy meant subjection to the rises and falls of the international economy, and a worldwide recession in the last two years of Franco's regime was a low point. Workers in Europe were forced to return home to Spain, and 1975 was the worst year since 1959, with negative growth (Carr 753).

The “two Spains” still existed: rural vs. urban as well as province vs. province. The statistics above on the regions that lost inhabitants to large industrial centers give us a good idea of this division. Galicia, Andalucía and Extremadura were the three poorest regions, and in the 1970s, “Every survey revealed a lower standard of living and a diminished participation in the benefits of the consumer society in the poor regions” (Carr and Fusi 65). “Poles of development” plans were created to aid the regions that shared the least in the economic growth, but these projects were merely propaganda and failed to produce the intended results (60). When they published their book in 1979, Carr and Fusi reported that regional disparities in per capita income remained “severe” (65). It seems that although Spain as a whole was no longer “different”, the still predominantly rural, underdeveloped Galicia and similar provinces *were*.

Social values

The sudden onset of modernization in Spain and the economic prosperity it introduced also translated to new values and new ways of thinking. For one, the influx of foreigners in a country that had been isolated for decades decreased xenophobia and introduced new social attitudes and behaviors. The “tourist invasion” brought cars, butane stoves, and plenty of seasonal jobs along the coastline, but it also introduced “a glimmering of new sexual mores to

the Mediterranean coast and its hinterland” (Carr 762). For a society that saw bikinis as scandalous and even had segregated beaches, one can imagine how the influx of millions of tourists from countries not controlled by an ultra-Catholic dictatorship helped to change ideas about dating and sexual relations, especially among young people.

As the nation opened to the rest of the world, the country became a destination “not only for tourists but for books and periodicals that brought new ideas” (Aguilar 305). An innovative and politicized publishing industry emerged, making cheap Spanish and Latin American paperbacks available, as well as “previously unthinkable” works of social comment, history, politics, and even translations of Karl Marx, although the regime’s startled censors did not let all of these novelties pass (Riquer i Permanyer 265). More Spaniards could travel abroad, and new cultural productions emerged, especially in literature and cinema. Riquer i Permanyer notes that the process of cultural massification that was establishing itself in Spain was different from that of other European countries, in that it was

extremely rapid, highly superficial, and rife with contradictions caused by the country’s peculiar political situation and by the substantial cultural shortfalls which existed. The spearhead of the phenomenon was television, popular music, and film. Spain passed rapidly from high levels of functional illiteracy to TV saturation without passing through intermediate stages of cultural development. This contributed to low levels of book and newspaper reading (265).

Regardless of the superficiality of the process, this “cultural massification” was an extremely important factor in introducing new ways of thinking. Spanish Television began regular broadcasts in 1959, and the television set became a window into the world previously inaccessible to Spaniards. These changes created an “increasingly alienated public opinion”,

especially in the younger generation, who had not lived through the civil war. Their critical attitude was based on their new and improved access to information about world affairs, as well as the decline of religious values, replaced by the consumerist values of Western society (266). As a result, democratic values like liberty and justice became increasingly attractive to the majority of Spaniards, who wanted to live like the more advanced countries of the West. The authoritarian mentality had not been erased, but its number of proponents was certainly dwindling (Aguilar 305).

Another indication of evolving ideas was the slow increase in the number of women in the workforce (Carr 756-758).¹⁸ The “American way of life” also made its way to Spain’s professional life, and efficiency and rationality were the new slogans of the 1960s business world. Parents encouraged education for their children as a way to escape the working class, made easier by the fact that by 1975 education extended to virtually the whole population, and the number of university students had quintupled since 1960 (Riquer i Permanyer 264). The massive population shift to the cities also resulted in a less conservative middle class.

Spain’s inclusion in the industrialized world in the 1970s also meant its inclusion in the consumer society of the West (Balfour 269). Yet, the shift to a materialistic, increasingly secular Western society was neither immediate nor complete. Spain experienced what Carr and Fusi call “superficial modernization”; by the 1970s, the nation’s value system was a mix of traditional, mostly Catholic values, and those of a modern capitalist society (79). Two star values of modern capitalism were materialism and consumerism, especially for the now more prosperous middle classes who could afford television sets and cars. The SEAT factory in Barcelona produced

¹⁸ It was still seen as “unnatural” for women, especially married women, to work outside of the home, but this attitude began to change.

30,000 cars in 1960; by 1972, the number had ballooned to 360,000. In 1960, half a million Spaniards owned a car (one car for every 55 inhabitants), and by 1974, the number was 3,300,000, or one for every nine inhabitants (Riquer i Permanyer 265).

The end of an era: 1975

As mentioned earlier, the distance between this new urban materialist society and the traditional rural Catholic values that Franco espoused was immense, and it is no wonder that the Franco regime was on life-support long before its *generalísimo* took his last breath. As the leader's health grew weaker, the opposition grew stronger. Balfour explains that, "For the regime, modernization without democracy turned out to be an insuperable contradiction. [...] The vertical, authoritarian syndicates of the regime were increasingly out of tune with the needs of a mobile, educated, and pluralist society" (270-272). Falangist rhetoric insisted that Spain was not ready for democracy, but it was the regime, not Spaniards, who were not ready. Protest acquired a more political character, and the greatest challenge came from the labor movement, who had suffered repression since 1969 but strengthened in 1973. The increase in the number of strikes between 1972 and 1974 was considerable; it rose from 853 to 2,290, and the number of work hours lost due to strikes tripled. In addition to the fight for wages and working conditions, these strikes were also staged with the hopes of the downfall of the dictatorship (Juliá 209). Organized labor also influenced other agitations, such as neighborhood associations. The weakened regime, conscious that any important reform could lead to a loss of control, responded with martial law and state brutality; protests and strikes often ended in violent, even deadly, repression. The government was quickly losing its ability to guarantee social order. On top of all of this, a

worldwide economic recession unleashed by the 1973 oil crisis heightened tensions in Spain and further weakened the regime's legitimacy (Balfour 273). Then in 1974, Franco lost an ally with the fall of his sister regime in Portugal following the country's revolution.

In an attempt to appease the growing opposition, the regime carried out what Balfour calls a "superficial refurbishment of the institutions" in the 1960s (273). For example, the government passed a Law of Association in 1964, allowing the creation of opinion groups; although these were restricted for fear that they would develop into political parties. The regime had reluctantly introduced collective bargaining in 1958, but the number and extension of strikes throughout the next nearly two decades proves that workers' rights under Franco left much to be desired. The above-mentioned Ley Fraga had similar objectives and results: give in to demands without relinquishing control. The 1966 referendum on the Organic State Law was "shamelessly manipulated by the authorities, who engaged in all sorts of duplicity and coercion" (Riquer i Permanyer 267). However, Belfour insists that "the attempt to win the acquiescence of the population through bread and circuses was only partially successful" (272). The regime was unraveling.

Also less than successful were relations with ETA. In 1968, the Basque extremist group initiated decades of terroristic violence by killing two police officers. By 1975, the group's victims numbered forty-eight. The most well-known victim was Admiral Carrero Blanco, Franco's prime minister and chosen successor, assassinated in downtown Madrid by one of ETA's bombs. These attacks would lead to the Burgos Trial in 1970, and later to the execution in September of 1975 of two members of ETA and three of the radical Marxist-Leninist group FRAP (The Revolutionary Anti-Fascist and Patriotic Front). These death sentences in turn

sparked national and international outrage, with pleas of clemency from several heads of state, from groups in Cataluña, from the Church (especially in the Basque Country) and even from the Vatican. These groups, however, were unable to halt the executions or the continuing violence. Just weeks later, on October 1st, 1975, another terrorist group killed four police officers. In the first eight months of 1975, terrorist groups from the left and from the right took the lives of eleven police officers (Juliá 211). By this time, the dictator was heavily medicated for Parkinson's disease, and had been forced to relegate almost all decision-making to his ministers. Francisco Franco's death on November 20, 1975 "dissolved the only glue that had held the regime together in its last years" (Balfour 273).

The Transition begins

Just two days after Franco's death, his widely accepted choice of successor as head of state, Juan Carlos de Borbón, was declared king. The new monarch immediately proposed "un efectivo consenso de concordia nacional", thereby indicating his commitment to creating a democratic Spain. The king's inner circle of advisors included Adolfo Suárez, who had been director of state television and radio, as well as vice-secretary of the National Movement. In July of 1976 King Juan Carlos was successful in his attempts to have Suárez replace Carlos Arias Navarro, the Francoist prime minister. The choice was not popular among some of the left and the center, given Suárez' history with Franco, but the prime minister surprised many. His first challenge would be to balance the demands between "diehard Francoists" ("the bunker") and the move for reform, a task facilitated by the opposition's willingness to put social reform on the back burner as the more urgent political reform was crafted (Balfour 273-74).

In 1976, the approval of a Law for Political Reform established universal suffrage, and soon new parties were created among the right and the center. The left already had long-standing organizations, many of which had emerged from exile or clandestinity (274). Suárez, the “emblematic Prime Minister of the transition proper” formed the Union of the Democratic Center (UCD), which won the first free elections in 1977, with the Socialists in a close second place (Viñas 250). Out of the elections also came the creation of the *Cortes* (Spanish parliament), charged with drawing up a new democratic constitution. This constitution, approved by 88% of voters in the referendum of December of 1978, turned Spain into a constitutional parliamentary monarchy based on universal suffrage and a party system. Some issues were deliberately ambiguous, but the primary goal of “allow[ing] for pluralism where for decades only one ideology and culture had been possible” was achieved (Balfour 274).

The peaceful transition, from a dictatorship to a modern pluralist democracy based on universal suffrage just three years later, stunned Europe and even became a model to follow for Eastern European nations. Carr maintains that the smooth transformation was the result of Suárez’ negotiating skills, the democratic opposition’s moderation, and King Juan Carlos’ legitimization of the “demise of the ‘inorganic democracy’”; the monarch was the true “motor of change” in Spain’s transition (769). Sebastian Balfour credits the rapid and relatively easy change to “the modernity of Spanish society as much as to the efforts of politicians. Equally important was the widespread popular mobilization for democracy and social reform that created the unavoidable necessity for political change” (276). Of course, not all parties were celebrating the undoing of the Francoist state, and neither was the army. This “‘rattle of sabres’, a legacy of the dictatorship” would be problematic for the new Spain (*ibid*). A planned coup was prevented

in 1978, but it was not the only military plan to overthrow the new government. Lieutenant Colonel of the Guardia Civil Antonio Tejero's attempted coup on the 23rd of February, 1981 was stopped in its tracks by fast action from the new king, a moment that many scholars cite as the end of the transition. The following year, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) came to power in the elections of October 1982, and would oversee the consolidation of the democracy.

Democratic Spain and its regions

Well before the dictator's death, it became clear that whatever shape the nation's politics would take after Franco, something would need to be done about the question of regional nationalisms. Fusi considered Basque nationalism "the main obstacle to political stability in the transition towards democracy" after the dictator's death, which is obvious considering the violence unleashed by ETA that same year (33). Earlier I cited Santos Juliá, who pointed out that Spain's modernization in the 1960s was not an entirely new phenomenon, but rather a natural continuation of a process that had been halted in the 1930s. The recognition of the rights of Spanish provinces in the new democracy is a similar case. The Second Republic had opened the way to a regional state, and the 1931 Constitution recognized the rights of the provinces to full autonomy. However, it did not grant self-rule to them automatically; the procedure to achieve it was difficult, not to mention vehemently opposed by the army, who saw in peripheral nationalisms an enemy of the idea of national unity (42-43). When the Civil War broke out, only Cataluña had been granted regional autonomy. A referendum on Galician autonomy was held in 1936, but the timing —in the month of June —could hardly have been worse. The rebellion that

erupted just one month later, with the centralist military rebels immediately conquering Galicia, dashed the hopes for Galician nationalists.

The so-called historical regions —the Basque Country, Cataluña and Galicia —had no administrative recognition whatsoever under Franco, and their culture and languages were repressed. Particularly in the years following Spain’s Civil War, the so-called peripheral regions of Spain experienced harsh repression (Mar-Molinero 81). Languages other than Castilian — dismissively referred to by the regime as “dialects” — were seen as subversive by the conservative, highly centralized political powers. As a result, the public use of these languages, including the one the *Generalísimo* must have learned from the cradle in his native Ferrol, Galicia, was both ridiculed and prohibited. In some advertisements, such as one that ran in A Coruña¹⁹ in 1942, locals were encouraged to be “patriotic” by speaking Castilian, rather than “barbarous” by speaking *Galego*, a tongue alluded to but considered unworthy of specific mention. In the earlier years of the Franco regime, those who did dare to publicly speak anything but “our Cervantine language”, in the words of the advertisement, could be fined or even imprisoned (Mar-Molinero 81). Such strict punishment was no longer possible after the passing of the Freedom of Expression Law in 1966, although de-stigmatizing these languages characterized by the regime as speech of the uneducated would prove a much more difficult task, particularly in Galicia and the Basque country, where the regional tongues had long been spoken by the popular classes but less so by the upper and middle classes, unlike in Cataluña. In fact, the

¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the very advertisement that condemns speaking the “barbarous” language (or dialect, as it was considered) uses that very same language to refer to the city as *A Coruña*, instead of the Castilian *La Coruña*.

process to de-stigmatize and increase the everyday usage of *gallego* continues today, over four decades later.

In the new democratic Spain, therefore, peripheral nationalism would have to take up where it had left off forty years earlier, during the Spanish Republic. In addition to the historical nationalities, other regions also yearned for home rule, such as Andalucía and the Canary Islands. One way to explain this intensified interest in the individual regions of Spain and their cultures is to view it as a manifestation of a wider phenomenon of the “heyday” of regionalism throughout Europe. Of course, it was also more than that. Not all European nations had been under the rule of a diehard centralist like Franco for four decades, and the feverish pitch of the cry for autonomy was certainly a reaction to such centralism, which not surprisingly came to be identified with totalitarian rule. The Constitution of December of 1978 responded to these realities. Article 2 affirms the “indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation”, as well as its “territorial integrity”, while at the same time recognizing “the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed”. In other words, Spain was conceived as a single political nation with a new, second level of self-government. The so-called “State of the Autonomous Communities”, as the new decentralized democracy is called, is composed of seventeen autonomous communities which reassembled the fifty provinces, in many cases overlapping with the previous historical regions (Núñez Seixas 322). The Constitution provided these three historical regions with a “fast-track” route for obtaining full autonomous status, and created a different route for other communities (such as the above mentioned Canary Islands) to achieve the same status. The autonomous communities (CCAA) would have their own President,

legislature, Supreme Court and various other areas of government, which would vary from community to community.

The question of regional languages was also addressed. The first clause of Article 3 of the Constitution states that all Spaniards have the “duty” to know Castilian, but the second clause also declares that, “The other Spanish languages will also be official in the respective Autonomous Communities in accordance with their statutes”, and the third states that the “richness” of Spain’s minority languages is “a cultural heritage which shall be the object of special respect and protection.” The CCAA with distinct languages declared these co-official, along with Castilian, in each of their statutes of autonomy. Galicia’s 1981 Statute, for example, declared the language of *Galego* official in the community, and among other things recognized the land as a historical nationality and outlined the powers of the regional government, including control of public works, education, healthcare, tourism, an independent broadcasting system, and a long list of other powers.²⁰ The 1983 Law of Linguistic Normalization also “formally enshrined the duty of Galicians to learn Galego, and their right to use it” (Gemie 140). The region’s language would from then on not only be taught in schools; it would also be the language of instruction for many academic subjects.

This new system is not without its faults and has certainly been criticized. To begin, the distribution of responsibilities to the CCAA in the Constitution was vague, there were struggles in implementation afterwards, and there are considerable differences between regions due to different statutes. Another complaint that still exists today is the increase in public expenditure due to the increased bureaucracy (Dudek 37). However, overall most scholars agree that the state

²⁰ Turnout for the referendum on the Statute of Autonomy was a surprisingly low 29 percent (Keating 17).

of the autonomies has been a political success, and it is significant that in just a few years, Spain went from a highly centralized nation to one of the most decentralized federal systems in Europe (ibid.).²¹

Spanish society during the Transition Religion and the Church

Missing so far from this discussion of the new democracy is commentary on the role of a very important player in Spanish life, and, until recently, in politics: the Catholic Church. We saw earlier that progressive members of the Church were vocal opponents of Francoism from the late 1950s on, and that Vatican II marked a clear departure from the old relationship between Church and state. Despite this opposition to the regime, which caused internal tensions, the Catholic Church as a whole drastically changed its strategy in political intervention. Aguilar explains that, “under the Republic [the Church] had intervened in political struggles and further poisoned the political atmosphere, but during the transition it remained aloof from the partisan conflict and frequently helped political actors to achieve a consensus” (311). The author adds that Church hierarchy did put “severe pressures” on the UCD when parts of the Constitution were being drafted, particularly those dealing with divorce and education, but overall maintained its distance. The role of the Church in politics had been dramatically reduced from what it had been not so many years earlier.

However, in spite of the decreased rigidity in Spanish Catholicism and the efforts by some to distance the Church from the regime, it seemed to be too little, too late. The Church in Spain suffered a considerable loss of prestige, in large part due to the “moral delegitimization”

²¹ Only Germany, Belgium, and Austria are more decentralized.

caused by its close association with, and support of, Franco's regime and the benefits it received as the official government religion during this period (Toro 64). Adding to this loss of prestige was a decreasing influence of the Church's role in society. The expansion of public schooling meant that the Church lost its near monopoly on education and the control of culture and "popular morality" (Juliá 181). This loss of power and prestige, coupled with a worldwide move toward secularization in the second half of the 20th century, led to a very different relationship between the Church and Spanish society.

Furthermore, as of 1978 Spain was no longer Catholic—at least, not officially. The new Constitution declared no official religion, and there was no explicit affirmation that the majority of Spaniards were Catholics (even though they were), thus beginning the transition toward the Church's self-financing. There was a slump in vocations in Spain and worldwide in the 1960s, as well as an increasing number of priests and nuns renouncing their vows. As birth-rates dropped considerably in Spain, particularly among the middle classes, it seemed clear that some practices officially condemned by the Church were becoming more acceptable in private (Carr 757). Also undeniable was a drop in Church attendance; in 1972, just 24% of the Spanish population regularly made it to Sunday Mass. The highest numbers of regular churchgoers corresponded to older citizens and those in rural areas, such as Castilla La Mancha, and the lowest numbers corresponded to younger as well as more affluent urban areas, such as Barcelona, where just 8% reported going to weekly Mass (Riquer i Permanyer 266).

The divide between young and old on the theme of religion in Transition Spain was sharp. While 80% of all Spaniards declared themselves Catholics in 1975, 60% of the under twenty-five Spanish crowd in the 1970s professed *no* religion (Carr and Fusi 100). Carr and Fusi

considered youth's rejection of "traditional Catholic values and those of the official culture" a "salient characteristic of modern [late 1970s] Spain" (98-99).²² This rejection of tradition was not only a result of youthful rebellion; traditional religious values simply clashed with those of modern Western society: As Carr explains, "While the Catholic values of austerity and abstinence 'fitted' an autarkic society of scarcity, they were eroded in an increasingly secularized society of which the TV set and the motor car were the 'golden calves'" (761-2). The "superficial modernization" of the early 1970s lost its superficial character as Spain grew increasingly more integrated into Europe in the late 20th century. This is not to say that the role of the Catholic Church in Spanish life, even among non-practicing Catholics, had disappeared. Even today it has not disappeared, although its influence on social values has certainly diminished.

La Movida

Perhaps the best example of the weight of modern social values over traditional Catholic ones is embodied in *La Movida*. Eduardo Subirats explains that after the initial excitement over the transition, criticism of the Socialist government of the 1980s rose, along with what the scholar calls "pasotismo"; university students had been politically committed in the 1960s and 1970s, but in the 80s, "Yo paso de todo" was the commonly heard manifestation of apathy and near-nihilism. After the attempted coup of 1981, novelist Javier Marías wrote in *El País* "As long as there is no coup, and as long as the party lasts...why not take advantage of it? Why not

²² By the onset of the twenty-first century, however, the country's youth was far enough removed from the years of obligatory Catholicism that rebellion against traditional religious practices was replaced by a general sense of indifference towards them (Díaz Barrado 123).

happily believe that the dance goes on?” (Subirats 74-75). Although *La Movida* originated in and is widely associated with Madrid, it spread all over the country. It was more about an attitude towards one’s reality than a specific place, and was part of the liberalization of culture and a greater openness across society. Subirats defines it as an aesthetic and intellectual attitude that had emerged in the aftermath of a fragile democratic transition, and as the social expression of an individualism that was at the same time “hedonist, conservative, commercial and vanguard” (77).

The professor identifies its defining characteristic as

un hedonismo *sui generis*, plenamente identificado con los valores narcisistas del consumo de masas, y adornado con la gesticulación neovanguardista de una falsa aristocracia intelectual. Su principio fue la banalidad de lo nuevo, a la que la inteligencia rindió culto a través de sus más dispares expresiones. (75)

Names like Pedro Almodóvar or the musical groups Alaska or Mecano come to mind when one mentions *La Movida*, but the many musicians, writers, and others associated with this phenomenon were not part of an artistic movement, nor did they espouse a concrete ideology. What they did all share was participation in the *destape*, the explosion and celebration of freedom after so many years of repression, which manifested itself in all areas of culture. What was previously prohibited, or at least taboo, was celebrated: sexual liberation —including open homosexuality —pornography, and alternative or “underground” culture in general. Even professionals and politicians, including socialist Enrique Tierno Galván, Madrid’s mayor, approved of and encouraged the movement, and mass communications, especially the radio, helped to spread the new values and the new aesthetic. Part of the celebration of the previously prohibited, however, was drugs. Levels of drug consumption rose, including the use of heroin

and other hard drugs. Soon the devastating effects —death by overdose, high crime rates, marginalization, etc. —became apparent and sparked public anti-drug campaigns, but so-called designer drugs appeared in the 1990s to replace those that had previously been popular (Díaz Barrado 267).

Subirats maintains that the movement did not have profound consequences, but says that in spite of its banality, or perhaps because of it, the *Movida* meant “una verdadera y radical transformación de la cultura. Neutralizó cualquier forma imaginable de crítica social y de reflexión histórica. Introdujo, en nombre de una oscura lucidez, la moral de un generalizado cinismo” (78). Speaking of society of the time and not just the *Movida* itself, Díaz Barrado adds that the young people of the 1970s, who had hoped for a return to the values of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* and of tolerance and passion for work, were a different breed from those of the late 1980s and early 90s, who instead placed importance on economic prestige and studied careers that would make the most money (267-71). However, despite the indifference of the young and new problems like AIDS and drug addiction, *La Movida* did have positive repercussions. It was “the image of modernity of the new Spanish democracy towards the outside”, and even foreign heads of state who visited Spain asked what the *Movida* was all about (Díaz Barrado 273). The world saw that free thinking and freedom of expression were part of the new democratic society, which helped to combat a negative image of Spain abroad.

The 1980s: Spain joins Europe

The *Movida* was only one of the changes that took place in Spain during its first decade of democracy. By 1980, Spain had a new constitution, a new central government, over a dozen new regional governments, and the numerous other changes described above. The country was eager both to show off its new prosperity and to join the rest of the world from which it had been in many ways removed for decades. While the nation had begun to turn toward the exterior in the 1960s, the process was cemented when Spain joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1982, and the European Community (EC) in 1986. The latter association was especially significant for two reasons. First, the once isolated nation had officially become a part of Europe. Second, it would experience a “Post EC boom”; Spain’s economy grew rapidly between 1986 and 1991, and in 1992 the country was 40% wealthier than it had been in 1980 (Montero 319). The new EC member became the focus of international attention on several important occasions, such as in 1992, when Madrid was the European Community’s capital of culture, Sevilla welcomed some forty million visitors for the World Expo, and Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games. This was the year that Spain definitively became “in style” worldwide, although it had been on its way since the previous decade (Díaz Barrado 275). In 1992 *Newsweek* dedicated an extensive report to this new “modern” country, and publications from other countries followed. A year later, Galicia would enjoy some international attention of its own for its Año Xacobeo (“Jacobean Year”), or Holy Year.

The 20th century revival of the Camino de Santiago

As the 20th century drew to a close, Spain was definitively in style, and so was the Camino de Santiago. The starting point for the “revival” of the Camino and of the traditional spirit of pilgrimage among the youth of the Western world is often cited as 1982, also a Holy Year, although we have seen that the wheels were in motion for the renaissance some years before (Singul 285). The previous Holy Year in 1976, just months after Franco’s death, was for obvious reasons not as celebrated as previous Jubilees, but even so attracted some four million visitors to Compostela. Nationalities that had done the pilgrimage in the past—English, Germans, and French—were again present, although less habitual visitors began to appear in greater numbers, from the United States, Mexico, Brazil and elsewhere. Thirty-nine percent of pilgrims that year came from outside Spain’s borders (Rodríguez 141). The most important foreign visit, however, was made by a Polish native in 1982. Pope John Paul II visited Santiago that year, an extremely important moment in the modern rebirth of the Jacobean pilgrimage. Juan José Cebrián Franco maintains that the Pope’s speech in Santiago in 1982, pronounced in the midst of a tragic moment for his native Poland, was the “*Magna Carta* of the modern pilgrimage to the apostle’s tomb” and that the Pope chose the pilgrimage, in which Europe’s residents would walk side by side toward a common destination, as an incentive for Europe to overcome its problems and work towards unity (73).

In the 1980s an infrastructure of *refugios* (hospices) for pilgrims appeared on the route, which allowed for travel with the assurance of cheap shelter. In 1985 UNESCO declared the city of Santiago de Compostela Patrimony of Humanity, and two years later it was proclaimed the first European Cultural Itinerary by the Council of Europe. Confraternities of St. James, whose

rebirth had begun in Spain and France in the 1950s and 1960s, sprang up all over the world in the form of Associations of the Friends of the Camino. They maintained and encouraged interest in the Camino, launched academic magazines, and played an important role in its revitalization (Singul 288-89). The decade of the pilgrimage's rebirth closed with another significant visit from Pope John Paul II, this time for World Youth Day, held in Santiago de Compostela in August of 1989. Young people poured in from all over the world for the event, only the second World Youth Day to be held outside of Rome, and the Pilgrim's Office was overwhelmed with the number of pilgrims on foot (Cebrián Franco 75).

As the 1993 Año Xacobeo approached, excavations were conducted underneath Santiago de Compostela's cathedral, resulting in further discoveries of cultural significance, and countless studies, conferences, videos, and publications of all sorts appeared throughout Spain and around the world to promote the Way (Singul 287). Pilgrimage routes were improved, cultural promotion was carried out, and the 1993 Holy Year was a resounding success, crowned by UNESCO's declaration of the Camino as Patrimony of Humanity. The same year, hundreds of thousands received a *Compostelana*, the certificate or "pilgrim's credential" given to pilgrims arriving to Santiago as far back as at least the 14th century to verify their completion of the pilgrimage (289).²³ The 1990s, says Francisco Singul, were "a golden age" for the pilgrimage to Santiago, years in which the Christian essence of the pilgrimage was recovered (*ibid.*). While

²³ The credential was of extreme importance in the Middle Ages and served as a legal document recognized in all Christian lands. The tradition was restored during the Jubilee Year of 1971, and although modern pilgrims no longer need to show their *Compostelana* when crossing national borders, it is still an important symbolic recognition of their pilgrimage for many. Today pilgrims may receive the *Compostelana* only if they have walked at least the last 100 km, or ridden at least 200 km by bicycle. The credential is the Church's way of recognizing that the individual has completed the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons, but another certificate is available for those citing other motives.

pilgrims on foot had been virtually impossible to find just decades before, the Camino suddenly became stylish, even attracting the actress Shirley MacLaine, who walked the Way in 1994, and Jenna Bush, the daughter of the American president George W. Bush, a decade later. The “golden” decade closed with the 1999 Holy Year, which was celebrated with great enthusiasm and high levels of pilgrims. The destination of these pilgrims would remain in the international spotlight at the onset of the new millennium, when Santiago de Compostela was named the European Capital of Culture. By this time, an extensive bibliography on every imaginable aspect of the Camino had appeared, and continues to grow, as do the numbers of films related to the Way.²⁴ The numbers of pilgrims speak even more clearly. In 1980, just 206 pilgrims by foot, bicycle or horse were recorded, a number that had swelled to 4,918 by 1990. In 2000, that number had multiplied to 55,004, and the recent *Xacobeo 2010* saw record-breaking numbers. Over 272,000 pilgrims received the official credential that year, a significant increase of 49.5% from the previous Holy Year in 2004 (Oficina de acogida de peregrinos 2010). This modern revival of a millennium-old tradition shows no signs of slowing down any time soon.

The Camino and a new kind of “sacred” in the Western world

It may seem paradoxical that during the leadership of Franco, an ultra-Catholic who wanted to glorify Spain’s past and recover the spirit of the medieval pilgrimage that passed through his country, the Camino de Santiago experienced low moments of interest—even after

²⁴ One of the most well-known Jacobean films is Luis Buñuel’s *La Vía Láctea* (1969), but more recent titles include *Camino de Santiago, el origen* (Jorge Algora, 2004,), *El Camino de Santiago, no un Camino de rosas* (José Álvarez, 2005) and *The Way* (2010), directed by Emilio Estevez (Herrera Torres).

the harsh postwar years had passed and Spain was enjoying increased prosperity—whereas its true revival began less than a decade after his death, in an increasingly secular society. The timing of the revival seems even more surprising if we consider that the dictator's death meant the loss of much financial support and political momentum for the Camino (Frey 245). Nancy Louise Frey reports that since Santiago was often associated with the official state devotion under Franco, and pilgrimages were often sponsored in dioceses, during the transition to democracy the Socialists were hesitant to maintain close ties to Franco's "symbolic alter ego, Santiago" (245). The American anthropologist reports that in the transition to democracy, just as during the dictatorship, "Santiago was not embraced quickly by Spaniards more familiar with Saint James the Moorslayer than with Saint James the Pilgrim" (Frey 245). Yet, despite a more secular society, negative associations with the past and less state support, numbers of pilgrims reached higher levels than they had in centuries.

Of course, a more secular society in the late 20th and early 21st century does not mean that there are not plenty of religious, especially Catholic, pilgrims. Thousands of young people travel the Way each summer with Catholic youth groups, and many parishes throughout Spain (and other parts of Europe) organize group pilgrimages. Juan José Sanz Jarque, a professor from Aragón, is a devout Catholic who prayed the rosary and attended Mass frequently, almost daily, during his 1993 pilgrimage. He also expressed his firm belief that St. James' bones lie within Compostela's cathedral. Juanjo Alonso, who traveled the Road by bicycle in 1992, is another pilgrim who is Spanish, devout, and also referred to visiting the holy bones in the cathedral. I have yet to find any non-Spanish pilgrimage account that claims a similar belief, and most give little or no attention to the issue. Even several religious pilgrims admit that they are not very

concerned about whether or not the apostle's remains are actually housed in Santiago's cathedral. Teresa Simal, who inserts prayers every few pages throughout her account, attended Mass during her pilgrimage and is very religious, confessed, "En la tumba estarán o no los restos del Apóstol, poco importa. Lo verdaderamente importante es que tras el misterio de la muerte viene la promesa de la Resurrección. Para que ésta se produjese yo tenía que vivir una muerte iniciática. Y a ella me acercaba" (185).

It is pilgrims like Simal to whom Suso de Toro refers when he remarks, "esa autonomía de la peregrinación, incluso en católicos practicantes, me sigue desconcertando. Como si el Camino tuviese vida propia y tuviese sentido por sí mismo, casi sin finalidad" (64). The author traveled the French Road by car (and therefore does not consider the trip a "pilgrimage") in 1998 with photographer Xurxo Lobato, and met several Catholic pilgrims who were believers, yet did not practice their faith. These pilgrims still found a deep religious or spiritual meaning in the experience, prompting the author and Compostela native to conclude that there is often separation between traditional religious devotion and Jacobean devotion. Another example is Mariano Encina Amatriain, who along with his long-time girlfriend Ana flew from Argentina to Spain to walk the Camino with the purpose of "searching for [their] own identity, the true meaning of [their] lives" (19). In his account of the pilgrimage, the author never states his religious affiliation or discusses his beliefs, but the reader can infer from a few references to "Alguien más" that he believes in some kind of a higher power. Then, nearly three hundred pages into the book, the seemingly vaguely religious pilgrim has an "encounter" with a statue of the crucified Christ in a small church. Encina Amatriain looks at the statue's outstretched hand and suddenly realizes that Christ is talking to him. The two have a long conversation, in which

they discuss the pilgrim's search for meaning on the Camino (269). Many pilgrims have deeply religious experiences on the Camino regardless of their previous religious beliefs or practices.

Despite these examples, for most modern pilgrims the Camino no longer has a religious meaning. José Ignacio Díaz Pérez is a parish priest in Grañón, a town along the French Road in La Rioja, who regularly celebrates Mass with and ministers to pilgrims. The priest notes, “En una sociedad como la nuestra en la que se vive la cultura del ‘sin’—cerveza sin alcohol, café sin cafeína, caramelos sin azúcar, etc., ha llegado el momento de la peregrinación sin la religiosidad” (258). Díaz Pérez, who has done the pilgrimage on multiple occasions, also notes that the degree to which pilgrims view the journey as a religious endeavor varies by culture. He has met “peregrinos” in France who refuse this title, preferring the more secular term “marchadores”, while he claims that Spaniards take offense at any suggestion that they are not true pilgrims, even though they may be agnostic or atheist (259). However, Díaz Pérez goes on to explain that a change in the meaning of pilgrimage for most is not necessarily bad: “in this way we have been able to liberate the pilgrimage from all rigorous corsets, we have freed it, we have returned it to the hands of the pilgrims, from which it never should have left” (*ibid.*). In this last sentence, the priest admits that the Church does not, and should not, have control over the meaning of the pilgrimage for each participant. He adds that walking the Road can have religious, cultural, recreational, or artistic meanings, just to name a few, or a combination of several of these.

Perhaps the most interesting of the priest's observations is his insistence that, in spite of the significant decrease in religiosity among pilgrims, the Christian meaning of the pilgrimage to St. James' tomb is not in danger. In fact, it is “in good health, in spite of suffering a few ‘colds’ from advertising and more than one touristic ‘sprain’, and those who were announcing its death

and preparing its burial can put their wreaths of flowers in water, or use them for something else” (261). Díaz Pérez actually views the fact that most pilgrims do not make the pilgrimage for reasons of Christian faith as an advantage; it gives the Church an opportunity to re-connect with pilgrims who may be searching for something deeper in their lives (262). As far as the public authorities who deal with the Camino, the priest asks only that they respect the religious nature of the pilgrimage. According to the former pilgrim and priest, the Church maintains that while pilgrimage is not an exclusively Christian practice, the Jacobean route *is* a Christian pilgrimage, despite some claims that a route existed before medieval Christians began walking towards Galicia. Díaz Pérez and Juan José Cebrián Franco are two of several scholars I have read who insist that no historical evidence has been found to support a pre-Christian route to Compostela or to Finisterre (256, 84).

So far I have talked about pilgrims who believe in Christianity and those who claim no religious affiliation, but these are certainly not the only types. Besides pilgrims from an array of other religions, such as Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam, it seems that there are new, increasingly important types of “sacred” unrelated to institutionalized religion. For one, there are alternative movements of esoteric knowledge and “New Age pilgrims”, made increasingly popular by Louis Charpentier’s *The Mystery of Compostela* (1973) and later Paulo Coehlo’s *The Pilgrimage* (1987). However, more than New Age or other spiritual motives, which I will not discuss in detail in my study, I am referring to the fact that people are looking for the “sacred”, for spirituality and/ or inner peace, in simplicity. As Mandianes Castro explains, “El peregrino busca, encuentra o no, desengancha de la vida diaria, descansa, se funde con la naturaleza, medita, hace ejercicios profundos de introspección, se sincera consigo mismo y con los otros

peregrinos” (183-84). Spirituality on the Camino is often related to a reaction against, and a temporary escape from, modern society. We have already seen that the beginning of the revival of the Camino in the 1980s coincided with the growth of materialism and individualism, in Spain and in Western society in general. Between 1980 and 1992, Spain’s GDP nearly doubled, and the majority of people were better off than they had ever been. Despite this significant improvement, the haves and the have-nots still existed, and regardless of income levels, many Spaniards were uneasy with, and resistant towards, the extremely rapid transformation of society. Many longed for the ways of old, far from Madrid’s crowded streets or the growing industrial cities to which so many had flocked in the previous decades. Rosa Montero maintains that Spain in the 1980s and 1990s experienced “a veritable obsession with money”, and “the bonanza seems to have gone to our heads, bringing out in us all the defects of the new rich: pretentiousness, ostentation, superficiality, selfishness, and a rejection of the poor worthy of the new convert, manifested in an increase in xenophobia and racism” (319). Pilgrimage implies the very opposite of these values: humility, understanding of others, and no class distinctions or status symbols.

Perhaps the modern revival of the Camino, whose early years were simultaneous with the *Movida*, was also a type of anti-*Movida*. Instead of hedonism, pilgrims accept suffering, discipline and sacrifice. Instead of a need to express individualism, there is a sense of brotherhood among pilgrims. Strangers help other strangers, bandaging their feet and sharing medicine and life stories. In place of drugs or other artificial ways to experience new realities, pilgrims search for new horizons in nature, in solitude and in prayer or meditation. This is not exclusive to Spanish society, of course. The “back-to-basics” movement—the desire to downsize, de-clutter, and eliminate the non-essentials that deplete one’s financial and emotional resources—

is international. Walking from the French border to the western coast of Spain with nothing but the most basic essentials on one's back is the ultimate "back-to-basics" challenge. Nearly all of the pilgrims whose narratives I have read find this challenge extremely rewarding, even life-changing. Some pilgrims have a specific motive for walking—religious devotion, a need to be alone and contemplate a major crossroads in life, a need to mourn a death or divorce—but others confess that they feel called to the Road for no reason other than a desire to "get away from it all."

In addition to the desire to escape the stress of modern life, change had swept most of late 20th century Europe. Not long after the beginning of the Jacobean revival, the Cold War had ended, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was the beginning of the "redemption of Europe" and of a period of desire for mutual understanding and peace. In the last quarter of the 20th century a new tendency called "Ecopacifism"—resistance to the arms race and to constant aggressions and violations of human rights—was a reaction to the violent 20th-century Europe (Díaz Barrado 280-81). Pacifist movements strengthened in the 1980s with the upsurge of the Cold War, and globalization was a major concern around the world in the last quarter of the century. Meanwhile, those working for a peaceful future were eager to preserve the past as well as their environment. Part of doing so in Spain was protecting the values of rural life, especially since, unlike other Western societies that had made the shift from rural culture to the "society of masses" gradually over a long period, Spain had done so with virtually no transition period (Carr 755). As a result, movements arose to attempt to control or limit this new industrial society. During the Transition period, an environmentalist movement emerged, and conservationists like Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente received considerable media attention, as did traditional

celebrations associated with rural life, such as Valencia's *Fallas* and Pamplona's *Sanfermines*. Spain had one foot firmly planted in the Western world of fast-paced urban life, and the other foot resolutely—and nostalgically—planted in the scenic countryside it fought to protect.

Speaking of nostalgia, Frey explains that “a general ‘revitalization of European rituals’ in the 1970s emphasizing nostalgia, heritage and play coincided with the movement to preserve the European patrimony and to recover a past and a ‘collective memory’ believed to be slipping away” (241). There was a desire for a more peaceful society, and the 1971 Holy Year (each one has a theme) was dubbed “The year of reconciliation”. With such important tasks at hand, along with more prosperity than in previous decades, the travel industry underwent a large-scale expansion at this time, with a particular interest in the past and in nature. For many educated, middle-class Europeans, the same population from which the majority of pilgrims to Santiago hailed, there was something slightly embarrassing about being a tourist like the millions that lounged on Spain's sunny coasts in the 1960s, a guilty pleasure when there was so much work to be done around the world. American writer Jack Hitt, who walked the Way in the early 1990s, explained that, “The tourist lacks something vital in travel—a sense of caprice, spontaneity, adventure, the open-endedness of life without a schedule. The tourist has none of these. He's treading on the circuit” (239). There was a desire to use one's time off from work away from this circuit for psychic restoration or inner discovery (Frey 241). A way to do all of these things as well as to preserve “collective memory” and medieval European patrimony in particular was to play the role of a pilgrim instead of that of a tourist, whether or not one was motivated by religion. We have seen a similar phenomenon in the United States as well in the last few decades, albeit not specifically involving pilgrimages. Many colleges and universities offer

alternative spring breaks for those students who opt to roll up their sleeves and work on rebuilding poor towns in the Caribbean rather than roll out their beach towels and work on their tans in Cancún. The idea that vacation time can be put to use for some noble cause, or at least for personal enrichment, has become increasingly popular.

It is not entirely surprising, given this collective frame of mind, that there was an upsurge in pilgrimage across Europe in the last two decades of the millennium. Even earlier, in 1971, the number of international pilgrims arriving in Santiago was on the rise, and in 1989 Mary Lee and Sidney Nolan reported that Western Europe's more than 6,000 pilgrimage centers attracted over 100 million annual visitors (1). Many of them partook in pilgrimage as “religious tourism” or “cultural tourism”, which offered an alternative to mass tourism and the “apparent superficiality of seaside travel” for many middle-class Europeans attempting to turn away from the overwhelming societal force of materialism (Frey 244). For the non-religious, the pilgrimage was at least “leisure with meaning” and “an ideal way to realize personal and social goals” for pilgrims whose role was increasingly becoming that of a more generalized “seeker, wanderer, and adventurer” (254). These new types of pilgrims could see medieval art along the Camino, explore churches and monasteries that had been standing for over a millennium, and live for weeks with only the belongings on their back, the boots on their feet, and whatever fellow pilgrims they encountered. Pilgrimage was an escape from modern life, from fax machines and computers, from agendas and obligations. For these late 20th-century, largely middle class pilgrims who eschewed fun-in-the-sun vacations and yearned to explore the past, “easy” car and bus trips, frequent modes of travel for pilgrims to Santiago before the 1980s, were not enough. The car was increasingly rejected in favor of going on foot, viewed as the more authentic mode,

or by bicycle, even though cycling the Camino is also criticized as less authentic by many walkers. Walking the way—slowly, painfully, blisters, sprains and all, at the mercy of the elements, just as medieval pilgrims had done—became paramount in the 1980s and 1990s, especially for non-Spanish participants (254).

It is in this broader context of rejection of excessive materialism and globalization, nostalgia for the past and a simpler life, as well as a desire to preserve nature and cultural patrimony, that we should understand the dramatic renaissance of the medieval pilgrimage, and keep this broader context in mind when looking at the new image of Galicia that emerges in modern pilgrim accounts.

Chapter 3: Galicia, a History

In order to understand this new image of Galicia we must first consider its “old” image. We have already seen that this northwestern corner of Spain, considered *Finisterre*, the end of the world, until 1492, became known across medieval Europe as the sacred resting place of the apostle credited with evangelizing much of the continent. As if this were not enough to put it on the map, Galician-Portuguese was also *the* literary language of prestige and sophistication in the Middle Ages, and not just on the Iberian Peninsula: poets across Europe, including France and Italy, used the language in their works. Masterpieces of Spanish lyric poetry, such as King Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa María* and the *Cancioneiro da Ajuda*, were composed in Galician-Portuguese. Yet, despite the glory of its holy city and its language of kings and poets, Galicia lost its prestige over the course of the centuries and became the often forgotten region.

Moving further back in the region’s history, Galicia was Romanized slowly and incompletely, unlike Cataluña, although neither region had much contact with the various Muslim populations that dominated much of the Iberian Peninsula for centuries. Therefore, the attention of the Asturian monarchs was almost always drawn southwards, with the intention of reconquering the peninsula. After the peak period of Jacobean pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, there were fewer pilgrims hiking through its rolling green hills, and Galicia was far away from the hustle and bustle of the capital city, a place that was easy to forget in the rest of the country,

except perhaps when its poverty-stricken emigrants appeared in Madrid and other large cities seeking means of survival. These inhabitants of the distant province became objects of scorn and were associated with ignorance, backwardness and misery. Manuel Azaña, who would later become President of the Second Spanish Republic, painted a grim portrait of Galicia in 1918:

las aldeas se componen de chozas fétidas...todo huele a establo, a berzas podridas. Allí viven revueltos hombres y bestias. En todo el camino de Coruña a Compostela no se encuentra una sola casa de campo, quinta, habitación o lo que sea que denote bienestar, holgura, limpieza; no hay más que viviendas de esclavos. (qtd. in Armas Diéguez 100)

This was not always the image of Galicia, as confirmed by the first guide/personal pilgrimage account. Aymeric Picaud, the French cleric to whom the 12th century *Liber Sancti Jacobi* has been attributed, paints a very positive picture of Galicia. He praises its rivers, orchards, and abundant wine, milk, honey, fish, gold, silver and livestock, before concluding that the Galicians are the people who, out of all inhabitants of Spain, most closely resemble the French. Despite his mention of the allegedly “irascible and very litigious” natives, Picaud describes Galicia far more favorably than he does most of the Spanish lands through which he passes, including the Basque Country and its “barbarous” people. This account was the only western Christian pilgrim guide for many years, and it was not until the 1400s that personal pilgrim accounts became common, the authors of which generally found in Galicia not the Arcadia that Picaud had painted, but more of a “desierto”—this word was repeated in several travelers’ accounts of the time—inhabited by poor, miserable peoples (Murado 39). In 1494, Doctor Hieronymus Münzer of Nuremberg set off from Lisbon en route to Santiago with several other German companions. The doctor had traveled extensively throughout the Peninsula, and found Compostela to be the Spanish city that he least enjoyed. Although he does note its good

land and abundant fountains, unlike several other travelers and pilgrims, he adds that the people are “porcine” and “lazy, because they do little to cultivate the land, so that they live mostly on the pilgrim trade” (qtd. in Krochalis, 73). In Portomarín, he reports, “the people live largely on pork flesh, and truly in all their doings they are unclean and porcine” (83). Many other pilgrim accounts of the era paint similarly bleak portraits of Galicia.

Why such differences between Picaud’s 12th-century account and those of 15th-century writers? For one, the Frenchman visited Galicia in a moment of prosperity, a moment which by no accident coincided with the peak of Jacobean pilgrimage. Diego Gelmírez, the famous 12th century archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, had been able, along with powerful allies like the duke of Borgoña, to persuade the Pope to convert the city into the Metropolitan See, while taking many other measures that resulted in the city’s importance. It was the center of the Astur-Leonese monarchy for decades, and crowned Alfonso VII emperor of León. However, the golden age of Compostela and its pilgrimage, as well as Galicia’s age of prosperity, had passed by the time Münzer and his contemporaries penned their accounts of the region. While under Fernando II (king from 1157-1188) and Alfonso IX (1188-1230) Compostela was the primacy of the Galician-Leonese kingdom, Fernando III effectively petitioned the Pope to have the primacy moved to Toledo in the early 13th century (Murado 63-64). The Castilian king even ordered that a “history” of his new kingdom be written; in other words, *invented*. Galician writer Miguel-Anxo Murado insists that from this artificial historical account²⁵ Castilian historiography was born, the same historiography that would be resuscitated centuries later, after the ideological

²⁵ Murado does not mention the title of this history, but is almost certainly referring to *De rebus Hispaniae*, written by Ximénez de Rada, archbishop of Toledo in the first half of the 13th century. The Navarra native wrote many historical works which later influenced Alfonso X’s work.

crisis of 1898, in order to construct the image of Spain; a Castilla-centric Spain (64). Suso de Toro points out that the Castilian king's son, Alfonso X the Wise (1252-1284), also took part in his father's plan to deliberately diminish the prestige of Galicia. While the learned king's name often appears in history books as part of Galicia's prestigious past, due of course to his authorship of *Cantigas de Santa María*, Toro notes that the king's motive for the work was political: he wanted to debilitate the "Jacobean myth" in an effort to decrease the importance of the powerful city and apostolic see of Compostela, to the benefit of Toledo (104).

The relevance for Galicia in all of this is precisely that it lost relevance. The kingdom that had been Galician-Asturian became the Galician-Leonese kingdom, and eventually turned into a province of the kingdom of Castilla, a status that it would maintain for four hundred more years (Murado 66). In this way, Galicia found itself in a somewhat strange position. Although it maintained its status as a "*reino*", or kingdom, it was politically subjugated with hardly any of its own institutions, its nobility was abolished or replaced, and it lived isolated from the center of power, "en una burbuja, rodeada de mar y montes, demasiado alejada como para que se la pueda gestionar eficazmente desde la corte" (ibid.). Almost all things Castilian were imposed on Galicia: language, nobility, high-ranking clergy, and laws. The Church and its powerful monasteries were the force that in practice, and according to common law on the fringes of Castilian laws, governed the "bubble" of Galicia. From 1520 until three hundred years later, not one monarch would set foot in this remote corner of Spain. Murado calls the Galicia of this period "una autonomía por olvido" (66). The independence of Portugal left the already isolated neighboring region even more cornered, and, to make matters worse, it suffered a series of wars resulting from power struggles among the Galician aristocracies.

This is not to mention the bloody *Irmandiña* wars, or the Great War of the Confraternities, in the 15th century. The *Irmandiña* wars were a series of revolts in which the peasants, with the support of some other groups such as lower nobility, rebelled against Galician nobles' oppressive control over, and abuse of, these people. A principal cause of this conflict was the system of contracted tenancies, or *foros*, that became the dominant form of land-holding in the 15th century. *Foros* were a medieval system of renting under which landowners received both rents and feudal dues from tenants and peasants, while returning almost nothing to the rural inhabitants. Although this system was not used exclusively in Galicia, it did have unique circumstances in the region due to the constant subdivision of land and the multiplication of property rights among more and more people (Murado 39). When aristocrats attempted to extract increasingly large amounts from their *foreros*, massive protests broke out and triggered these 15th-century wars. Apart from the destruction of some one hundred and thirty castles and forts, the leaders of the rebellion did not achieve their objectives: not only were they executed, but the series of revolts also facilitated the incorporation of Galicia into the kingdom of Castilla. For the Catholic Monarchs, Isabel and Ferdinand, the revolts were quite convenient to their plans of centralization. They supported the nobles in their brutal defeat of the *irmandiños*, and then stepped in to defeat the same nobles (Gemie 25-26).

In addition to being isolated from the center of power and linked to a crown that did not pursue Galicia's interests, the region was also excluded from major opportunities for economic growth such as the *Mesta*, the sheep-farming cartel that benefited farmers in Spain's center or *meseta*. It was also left out of trade with the Americas, unlike Andalucía, another traditionally poor region, or Lisbon, down the coast from Galicia, which captured the Portuguese imperial

trade (Keating 14). Andalucía at least benefited from the gold and silver that entered Sevilla from the New World, and the men of Extremadura, another poor region, could join the army or the “route to the Indies”, which was not an option for Galicians without university degrees until the 18th century (Murado 74). In Galicia’s more prosperous Middle Ages, the exportation of its Ribadavia wines was an important part of its economy, but eventually these were replaced by Portuguese harvests. And of course, another profitable, indeed booming, “business” for Galicia in the Middle Ages was Jacobean pilgrimage, which, as we know, was in decline during the 16th century largely due to the Protestant Reformation. The afflicted northwestern region of the Peninsula could not even catch a break from Mother Nature. An abrupt, world-wide climate change resulted in disastrous harvests in the last quarter of the 1500s, with years of catastrophic rainfalls and hardly any of the dry years necessary for Galicia’s farmlands (73). If we add to all of these realities the fact that the region also suffered from overpopulation, it is easy to understand that most Galicians lived in complete and utter poverty. In fact, says Murado, it is possible that Galicia was during these centuries the poorest place in all of Western Europe (74). In addition, it is essential to note the sharp division between the coast—which could live off of the sea and had more contact with the outside through its ports—and the interior, or “hinterlands”. Almost all pilgrimage routes in Galicia pass through the region’s interior, not the coast or the cities (until reaching Santiago, of course). Therefore, pilgrims like Albani, who could find hardly any food, were experiencing the *Galicia profunda*, the part of the region that was often the very poorest.

By now the motives for massive emigration are obvious, and we will later see how these Galician emigrants were perceived and treated in their new lands. Espido Freire, the daughter of

20th-century emigrants but born and raised in the Basque Country, summarizes the difficulties of her family's homeland throughout the centuries:

A cada siglo que pasa, su región queda con menos recursos. Los castellanos esquilmarán sus montes para construir los mástiles de la Armada Invencible, una deforestación brutal de la que ya no se recuperarán. Luego peinarán sus aguas en busca de más pescado, de marisco más fresco. Olvidados por todos, condenados a ser un pueblo casi exótico por la nota de color que aportaban a aquellos extranjeros seguidores del Camino, recibirán menos formación que otros, se les dejará que continúen con las suicidas políticas de desmembramiento de tierras, de saturación de territorio, de falta de formación e iniciativas. Siempre ha habido lo justo para vivir porque los más fuertes, los más valientes, se han marchado en oleadas sucesivas a hacer fortuna en Cuba, en Argentina, en Alemania. (183)

The deforestation that Freire mentions, which occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries, was the worst, although not the only, instance in the region's history. Galicia's forests are naturally rich in oak and chestnut trees, woods that do not splinter and therefore were ideal for building war ships, each of which required no fewer than two hundred oak trees. As each and every oak had to be centenarian in order to avoid cracking, it is not difficult to understand why the construction of Spanish Navy boats was so disastrous for Galicia (Murado 40). Murado notes that, “Con [la Armada Invencible], no solo se hundió ‘el honor del Imperio’ (fuera eso lo que fuese), sino también el mucho más útil arbolado de Galicia” (40-41).²⁶ The region's abundant forests were not the only expendable good at the service of the Crown. Also in the era of the Austrias, with nearly constant wars, Galician peasants were “carne de cañón” for the army and

²⁶ As recently as the early twentieth century, during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Galicia's forests were re-populated with the purpose of selling the wood, thus trying to convert the land into a wooding region, to the detriment of communal lands. Such efforts provoked violent protests from Galician peasants and even intentional forest fires (Murado 41).

the navy, in which they were constantly forced to serve. A number of men from A Coruña were recruited at gunpoint in 1603 for a suicide mission in Oquendo, and Galician troops were used several times for experiments, such as one settlement in the Alpujarras, which not one of the more than five thousand men, all Galicians, returned alive (78). In addition to the loss of so many lives in these types of military missions, the constant vacating of men from Galicia's farmlands (keeping in mind that it was an agricultural society) to fill far-off battlefields with her soldiers was catastrophic for the region's harvests, plunging it into deeper poverty (39-40).

It is hardly surprising, yet important to note, that Galicia's image deteriorated along with its political power. As mentioned earlier, it became a province of Castilla, and considering this history we can understand why 15th-century pilgrims began to record a grim, impoverished Galicia. Murado explains that, "De repente, el mismo país que para los viajeros del siglo XII había sido dulce y frondoso, se volvió a partir del XV en un lugar repulsivo" (39). It was during the era of the Austrias, specifically during Spain's Golden Age (late 1400s-late 1600s) that a strong social hatred of *gallegos* exploded. Some of the finest Spanish writers of the time, and indeed in the entire history of Spanish literature, such as Tirso de Molina and Lope de Vega, relied on Galicians for the butts of many of their jokes. Most of these targets had immigrated to the capital city, where they took any employment that they could, occupying the most humble positions, such as those of lackeys and unskilled laborers, roles in which they would be immortalized in the theater of the time. Galicians were portrayed in Golden Age literature as low- class, ignorant, crude, lazy, untrustworthy, immoral, ugly—even grotesque ("bestias" in Góngora's exact words), irreligious, and as *pícaros* or thieves. In short, it is no exaggeration to say that Galicians were depicted in the Spain of the Austrias, by many at least, as sub-human.

Jaime Orts wrote that “gallego y bestia son similares”, and the 17th-century Castilian writer Amaro Rodríguez refers to the people in question as “los animales de los gallegos”. Sadly, the derogatory remarks included in this chapter are just a small sampling of what has been written about the region so harshly judged throughout many centuries of its history.

This does not mean that there were no positive references to Galicia in these artists' works. Tirso de Molina, for example, did praise the richness of the land's natural resources, painting it almost as a *locus amoenus* in *Mari-Hernández la gallega* and other works. Lope de Vega also represents Galicia and its people in a very positive light in *El mejor alcalde el rey*. This work praises the region's natural beauty and portrays the peasants as humble, loyal and honorable. However, despite some exceptions, and despite positive commentary about Galicia's abundant waters, valleys and seafood; its inhabitants, their customs, their language and even their food (now considered by many to be among the finest in Spanish gastronomy) were consistently ridiculed in the literature of the time. The treatment of the region's women in Golden Age literature was particularly harsh, especially in terms of their supposed sexual immorality and their physical appearance. An excerpt from Lope de Vega's *La burgalesa de Lerma* gives us an idea of the popular image of *gallegas*:

Hay gallega rolliza como un nabo,
entre puerca y mujer, que baja al río
y lava más gualdrapas que un esclavo,
cantando como carro en el estío;
hay otras que en bailar, mas no lo alabo,
a lo que es desvergüenza llaman brío,
y entre el tendido paño que se seca
van haciendo barreno la muñeca. (50)

Both men and women were also stereotyped as enjoying far too of much the wines of their region, which were known to be of good quality. We see this idea in the following verses by Francisco de Quevedo:

con seis ducados de un ama,
galleguísima taberna
que, suspirando cuartillos,
si a mamar al niño llega,
le da aguardiente por leche
y un alambique por teta;
y luego tenella en casa
por aquesta honrilla negra
del qué dirán. (563)

Although he was his sworn enemy, Luis de Góngora shared Quevedo's negative vision of Galicia. The following *octavilla* is just one example:

¡Oh montañas de Galicia
cuya (por decir verdad)
espesura es suciedad,
cuya maleza es malicia! (339).

Góngora's "A Galicia", contrary to what the title would suggest, is an even harsher assessment of the land and its people. The region's inhabitants are portrayed none too favorably in *el Quijote*, as is the case with other Cervantine works such as *La señora Cornelia* and *La entretenida*. In general, despite a few exceptions, the only Galicians who were portrayed favorably in the literature of the time belonged to the nobility, such as the Count of Lemos, but

the overwhelmingly negative depictions of the rest of the region's peoples overshadowed these few and far-between laudatory verses. As we will see, the hatred and ridicule of Galicians in Spain long outlasted the country's Golden Age.

Galicia and Religion

Mentioned earlier in the long list of stereotypes of Galicians during the 16th and 17th centuries was the adjective “irreligious”. This may stand out to some readers, considering the fact that Galicia's greatest city has long been known as the burial place of the patron saint of Spain, no less than the land around which Christian Europe revolved during part of the Middle Ages. This particular perception of the *gallego* as impious, and the theme of religion in Galicia in general, deserves some attention. For one, this stereotype of “Gallegos, gente *non sancta*”, in the words of Lope de Vega, was particularly damaging, as it often led to accusations of belonging to the highly undesirable groups of *conversos* or *moriscos*.²⁷ This was a very serious matter in the society of the Counterreformation, a society obsessed with purity of blood. Interestingly enough, Galicia's geography made it very improbable that its inhabitants could even be *conversos*, which was not the case in regions like Andalucía. Galicia was populated mostly by peasants, and since Jews historically did not work the land, these peasants could not have had Jewish ancestors.²⁸ Nevertheless, Gonzalo de Correas affirmed that the *gallego* was willing to “become a Moor”, along with his wife and children, for two and a half *reales* (Murado 80). In other words, the Galician would readily sell his soul, and sell it cheaply. In 1556, a

²⁷ *Conversos* and *moriscos* were inhabitants of Spain and Portugal of Jewish or Muslim heritage, respectively, that had converted to Christianity.

²⁸ The theme of farm workers as “*sedes de honor*” with purity of blood appears often in Lope de Vega's theater and other Golden Age literature. See Américo Castro, *De la edad conflictiva*, 1961.

Castilian Jesuit wrote that the Galicians were more in need of the teaching of Catholic doctrine than the indigenous peoples of America. The project of Galicia's "re-Christianization" was also discussed at the Council of Trent (1545-63).

It is true that the region's pagan roots remained a part of Galician popular religion and were incorporated into its practice of Catholicism, similar to the blending of indigenous and Catholic beliefs in the Americas. However, this was no less true in the 11th or 12th centuries, when Galicia enjoyed a more favorable image, than it was in the 15th and 16th centuries. Perhaps part of the "impious" label comes from the reality that Galicians tended to have less of a devotion to the apostle Santiago than the rest of Spain. This may seem surprising, on one hand, and certainly did not mean that Galicia failed to recognize the importance of having the apostle's tomb on its soil; Diego Gelmírez is proof of this. Also, centuries after the influential archbishop's death, the Compostelan Church would again have to protect its greatest treasure from King Felipe II, who coveted Spain's most prominent relic. In the late 1500s, the ultra-Catholic monarch attempted to transport the apostle's body to his palace of El Escorial, where he had amassed an impressive collection of relics from all over Europe. The request of the most powerful man in the world at the time was politely but adamantly refused, demonstrating how important the saint was to Galicia (Eire 266).

On the other hand, the region's diminished level of Jacobean devotion is not so surprising. The bishops and clergy of the holy city that defended their claim to the saint's body did not necessarily represent the *pueblo* and its sense of religiosity. The larger-than-life figure of the apostle credited with evangelizing much of Europe and saving the Iberian Peninsula from the "infidels", portrayed on an elegant white horse perched triumphantly above his defeated Muslim

opponent, was probably not the best representative of a land as humble as Galicia. Instead, many parts of this corner of the peninsula held a strong devotion to St. Andrew, the apostle who was sent to evangelize the pagan lands of Galicia and then ordered to remain there permanently. St. Andrew was the apostle who watched with sadness as swarms of pilgrims arrived at nearby Santiago, yet nearly no one came to his shrine until Christ assured the melancholic apostle that, “*A San Andrés de Teixido, vai de morto quen non foi de vivo*”. He who does not go to San Andrés in this life would be obliged to go after death, says the legend. This apostle better captured the spirit of the stereotypically melancholy Galicians, who looked on in despair at Toledo and Madrid while they were left nearly abandoned. St. Andrew, like Galicia, had had his moment of glory. He was an apostle, he had evangelized the northwestern corner of the peninsula, and he was known to have performed miracles, healing many who believed in him. Galicia was a kingdom and the seat of the monarchy; its language was sophisticated and prestigious, and it was the destination of millions of Christians. Yet, both San Andrés and Galicia became the forgotten ones.

There has always been certain rivalry between the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and that of San Andrés de Teixido, a small coastal shrine located some one hundred and fifty kilometers north of its “rival” shrine. The leafy zone of A Capelada, in which San Andrés is situated, is considered to be one of the most magical parts in all of Galicia, alluded to in countless legends (Bouzas and Domelo 248). Of course, there are plenty of Compostelan legends as well, but these are more international. San Andrés was (and still is) a Galician shrine. It is “do pobo” (of the people), whereas Santiago is “dos cabaleiros”, or a gentleman’s pilgrimage (Mandianes Castro, “Santiago” 66). Anthropologist Manuel Mandianes Castro explains,

“Santiago is the invasion of the foreign on Galicia; San Andrés is tradition. Santiago represents the official and the orthodox, and San Andrés, that which has survived the hiding and the superstition” (ibid). Then there is the age-old question of town vs. country. Galicia has always been a predominantly rural society; pilgrimage turned Santiago de Compostela into a city, while even today San Andrés remains a tiny village in a remote location. There has never been a lack of shrines or of *romarías* (pilgrimages) in Galicia, and San Andrés is hardly the only one that has enjoyed a strong popular devotion. Some others, and this is just a sampling of a very long list, include Santa Mariña das Augas Santas, the monastery of the Virgin of Franqueira, the Milagres de Amil, Santa Marta de Ribarteme, and Nosa Señora da Barca in Muxía (Fraguas Fraguas).

In short, Galicia’s unique religiosity was just another trait that set it apart from the rest of Spain. It was one more feature that was misunderstood by outsiders and used to ostracize, ridicule and even persecute Galicians. The stereotype of the impious *gallego* illustrates the distance between the image of Galicia during the golden age of pilgrimage and that of the poverty-stricken object of scorn that was the Galicia of Golden Age Spain.

Visions of Galicia in 17th and 18th-century pilgrim accounts

We have already seen what some of the most prominent Spanish writers were saying about Galicia at the time, and one cannot help wondering if this literature also influenced foreigners’ opinions of the region. Several outsider views come from French and Italian pilgrims who published accounts of their journeys to Santiago in the 17th and 18th centuries. One of these is by Nicola Albani, who set off from Naples in 1743 en route to St. James’ tomb, a grueling five-and-a-half month-long trip. After getting lost in dense fog near O Cebreiro, terrified that he

could become the next deceased pilgrim to be commemorated with a small cross along the Camino, the Italian pilgrim could find shelter only in a hayloft. Disheartened after his difficult trip, he tells of the poverty of Galicia, explaining that its villages are,

pueblos desiertos e infelices, algo de no creerse; que en aquellos lugares no se encuentra más que pan de grano de la India, que el pan de trigo se vende como reliquia, vino no se consume, que viene algo de lejos cuando hace buen tiempo, y va muy caro, pensad qué cosa buena puede ser lo que va de un pueblo a otro, ni hay agua buena de fuente, sino que son todas aguas de lluvia, ni se utiliza carne de ninguna clase, sólo pollos y huevos, no hay lácteos ni verduras, sino sólo abundancia de nabos, de legumbres hay mucha abundancia, de frutos, sólo hay castañas, y ya no hablemos de cosas delicadas, que no saben ni lo que es eso. (217)

Albani also remarks that there are no *ventas*, or hostels, to be found, and if one is lucky enough to come across an inn, it is sure to have nothing more than a few eggs and a bit of wine.²⁹ Two decades later, Albani's fellow countryman Paolo Bacci can find no such wine in Galicia, nor a comfortable bed, but he is more disconcerted about what the inns do have: an ample supply of vermin (Bacci 127). Another 18th-century pilgrim, the first Spaniard to publish a personal pilgrimage account, also found Galician lodging to be less than adequate, to put it mildly. The well-known Salamanca writer Diego Torres y Villarroel tells of Galicia, "aquel potroso y enfermizo pedazo de la tierra", with an exaggerated air of disgust (310). Upon his arrival at O Cebreiro, the first spot in Galicia along the Camino, the Spanish writer recounts with horror the inn that he encounters: "me vi hundido hasta los corvejones y embadurnado hasta los lomos de cagalutas destetadas, cagajones desleídos, boñigas insulsas, y otros puches y almíbares del

²⁹ Some villagers he meets, however, are hospitable and incredibly generous in sharing the little they have with the stranger.

estiércol que arrojan los brutos con quien se acuestan y acompañan *las rudas gentes de aquellos miserables y desterrados zangarrones del mundo*” (309, italics mine). Torres continues in detail the account of this stinking inn, where he finds himself, “rodeado de *bueyes, cabras, cochinos y gallegas, que todo es uno para lo de la limpieza y la civildad*” (*ibid.*, italics mine). The following is his first description of the Gallegos he encounters:

Vi [...] un gallegón ahito de cuerpo, trompetero de mofletes barrigón de ojos, barbado de agujones, y tan abochornado de vista que vomitaba fontiñanes y esquivias con cada guiñada. Era gordo de badajo con un buen besugo por lengua, embotado de pronunciación y un cencerro boyuno por boca. Tenía una cabellera de lombrices, pero tan rabona que no le pasaba de la nuca, dejándole a la vergüenza un par de orejas ramplonas tan grandes como dos botijos portugueses. Descubría unos trancones de brazos y piernas tan rudos y espesos de pelambre, que me pareció estar revuelto en la piel de un oso. [...] A par de sí estaban dos gallegas priorales, macizas, barrigudas y frisonas, pero tan grasiertas como si estuvieran formadas de chorizos y morcones. Tenían dos pescuezos cagalares, tripones, peludos y rodeados de pringue, y las cabezas entretalladas entre un arnero de tetas, mayores que el bandujo de una vaca y tan poltronas y esponjadas que podían servir sus cojinetes de asiento al gigante Malambruno. (310)

He later calls these women lazy, “rollizas tronas” and “tarascas” (large, ugly monsters, or shrewish women) (310). Torres does also deal his *compatriotas* from other parts of Spain a few good jabs, but the hardest blows are reserved for Galicians. Shortly after his harsh comments, Torres assures his readers that his depiction of the region’s peoples is for comic purposes, merely “por seguir el tema de la jocosidad, pues confieso el bellísimo trato, crianza, ingenio, aplicación y piedad de todos sus moradores” (315). While the account is clearly a case of literary exaggeration intended to make his readers laugh, not to convince them of Galicians’ complete

and utter barbarity, Torres' depiction of the *gallegos* is nonetheless noteworthy. Behind every joke lies some truth, and behind the writer's stylistic game we see a generally negative vision of Galicians in 18th-century Spain. Perhaps this was even worse than that of previous centuries, although it seems unlikely, due to the stigma of backwardness attached to the region in the century of the Enlightenment.

O Rexurdimento

It may have taken a few hundred years, but 19th-century Galician intellectuals fully recognized their nation's plight, which was exacerbated in this century due to massive emigration and famine, as well as a difficult transition between the Ancient Regime and the liberal state (Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 93). These intellectuals felt compelled to work towards advancement for their land by creating a national identity, one that would dispel the so-called *leyenda negra*, or the negative image of Galicia that we have seen throughout the chapter. At the time, nationalism had spread through Europe, sparking a revival of regionalism and creating an intellectual environment conducive to the Gallegistas' goal, as well as those of Basque and Catalan nationalists. The latter group produced a large literary output in Catalan in the first half of the 19th century, a period in Cataluña which came to be known as the *Renaixença* (Renaissance). This cultural movement later inspired a political movement, and the region's cultural revivalists began to identify their language as an “essential core value to Catalan identity” (Mar-Molinero 77).

The Basque Country experienced a cultural revival, albeit different in several ways from that of Cataluña,³⁰ as did Galicia in the second half of the 19th century with its *Rexurdimento*, primarily a literary and cultural movement. Galician writers like the great poet Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885) wrote in the region's own language, reviving it after *os séculos escuros*, "the dark centuries" in which the melodious sounds of the once prestigious literary language had fallen silent, at least in print, replaced by Castilian. The "lengua de pobres y de poetas", as Álvaro Cunqueiro later dubbed it, was recognized during the *Rexurdimento* as a language, not a dialect. Curros Enríquez (1851-1908), author of Galicia's national anthem, denounced in his writing the injustices that his fellow countrymen suffered and defended ideas of progress for his homeland. Rosalía de Castro also reacted to centuries of xenophobia towards her people, holding nothing back in her verses:

Permita Dios, castellanos,
castellanos que aborreso,
que antes os galegos morran,
que ir a pedirvos sustento.
Pois tan mal corazón tendes,
secos fillos do deserto,
que si amargo pan vos ganan,
dádesllo envolto en veneno (28. 29-36)

³⁰ See Mar-Molinero, 77-79. The author points out the differences between the Basque and Catalan languages, the reaction of the industrial bourgeoisie in each region to the movements, political expressions of regional identity and other disparities. Galicia's *Rexurdimento* was also different from that of the other two historical nationalities in several aspects.

Rosalía dared to do what practically no Galician had done before³¹ in this bold public defense of her land. These verses are directed specifically towards the region that for centuries saw an influx of *gallegos* each year during the harvest, a practice that continued well into the 20th century. Her plea to the “iron-hearted” Castilians to “trata de ben ós gallegos/ cando van van como rosas/cando vén, vén como negros” gives us an indication of the type of treatment that these seasonal migrant workers often received (28.105-109).³²

The *Rexurdimento* was just as much about celebration, however, as it was about vindication. Nineteenth-century *galeguistas* used three strategies in order to whitewash their country’s “black legend” of the poor, ignorant farmer: provincial politics, literary Romanticism, and historical vindication (Rivas, *El bonsai* 143). Nationalist groups and cultural associations were formed, literary contests were held, and Galicia’s history was researched back to its prehistoric roots and published in books like Manuel Murguía’s multi-volume *Historia de Galicia* (1865-1911). The region’s Celtic past was exaggerated (and by some accounts, directly invented).³³ Following the Catalan model of the *Jocs Florals*, Galician writers organized their own *Xogos Florais* in 1861, where they celebrated poetry in their own language, and by the 20th century the *Real Academia Galega* was founded to standardize the language kept alive orally for centuries. The first third of the 20th century also saw the creation of the *Partido Galeguista*, and

³¹ Benito Jerónimo Feijóo (1676-1764) and Martín Sarmiento (1695-1772) also defended Galicia against the criticisms of their contemporaries.

³² See the catalogue of the exposition *Gallegos a Castilla, “Segadores en Tierra de Campos”*, Valladolid, 1999 for more on this topic, including the perceptions, both positive and negative, of these laborers in Castilla.

³³ In the words of Manuel Rivas, “Digamos que Galicia es celta a partir del siglo XIX, cuando la historiografía romántica crea el mito del fundador Breogán” (*Galicia contada* 41). I will return to the theme of Galicia’s Celtic origins in my discussion of contemporary pilgrim accounts.

the *Irmandades da Fala*, the first political organization in Galicia that used only the Galician language (Tarrío Varela 59).

This spread of regionalism in 19th century Spain was simultaneous with the Romantic movement's fascination with the exotic or the unusual, also helping to awaken an interest in marginalized cultures with distinct languages (Mar-Molinero 75). Thus arose an interest in regional dress, language, trades, celebrations, customs, everyday "common" people and their ways of life, all depicted nostalgically in *costumbrista* accounts such as *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* (1843-44) and the numerous similar accounts that followed, portraying in detail the peoples of a particular region. Galician authors penned their own collections, eager to celebrate their own *cigarreras* (female cigar factory workers), fish vendors, and farm women.

While Galicia was experiencing a nationalist revival, however, the "España de pandereta" was being further cemented. This is the image of Spain as a land of wine and sunshine, populated by bullfighters and dark-haired, dark-eyed exotic beauties in swirling skirts and lace headdresses. This false image of Spain was spread by 18th and 19th century travelers, including young Britons on their "Grand Tour" of Spain, who tended to travel to the capital and the southern areas of the country, such as Andalucía, or the Mediterranean coast. Scholars Maryjane Dunn and Linda Kay Davidson explain that British and American travelers of this "pre-tourist era", who often penned accounts of the unusual sights and customs they encountered, were "lured by sunny skies and cheap prices" but "often by-passed Compostela as being gloomily Celtic and far from their stereotype expectations of wine, olives, bullfights and flamenco so often depicted" (xxx).

Worse than being overlooked by young English gentleman, however, was the treatment of Galicians by fellow Spaniards. In Xesús Alonso Montero's *Galicia vista por los no Gallegos*

(1974), a compilation of over four hundred writers' comments on this region dating back as far as the second century AD, a considerable number of writers portray Galicians as crude, unintelligent and animal-like,³⁴ just as they did in the examples we have seen from the Golden Age. In 1837 Mariano José de Larra penned the following definition: "El gallego es un animal muy parecido al hombre, inventado para el alivio del asno" (qtd. in Alonso Montero 90). In "Aldeanos en la Corte: las gentes del norte de España, vistas por los madrileños (siglos XVIII y XIX)", Salvador García Castañeda explains that, as the two principal schools of *costumbrismo* during the Romantic period were the Madrilenian and the Andalusian, "No faltaron quienes pensaran que los usos y costumbres meridionales representaban los del país", and that northern Spain, perceived as distant and even savage, "apenas contaba" (58). In the popular *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*, the majority of "types" represented were Andalusian, while other regions were underrepresented or ignored completely (García Castañeda 59). It was as if northern Spain was somehow less Spanish than other regions. What is worse, García Castañeda explains, in the collection *Los españoles*, northern Spain is portrayed as "exotic" and "archaic", and most Madrilenians focused on only the poor laborers from these regions, who came to the capital in search of work and took menial positions such as those of water carriers and coachmen, therefore never giving an accurate representation of these lands (60). So it was that these northerners were seen by many bourgeois Madrilenians as uncouth, backward, and

³⁴ There are also several authors who defend them, such as Azorín (José Martínez Ruiz) or Miguel de Unamuno. In 1907 the latter defined the inhabitants of the region as "los honradísimos, nobilísimos y laboriosísimos gallegos, cuyo nombre ha llegado a tomar una estúpida significación despectiva en boca de mentecatos y petulantes" (qtd. in Alonso Montero 45). Their work ethic is one of the most highly praised attributes in this collection. However, Unamuno also attacked *gallegos* on several other occasions, such as when he criticized Rosalía's famous lines, "Castellanos de Castilla/ tratade ben ós gallegos", quoted above. Unamuno denied the unfair treatment (documented since the 18th century) of Galicians seasonal workers who travelled to Castilla to work the harvests, insisting that, "Eran ellos [los gallegos] los que se trataban mal por ahorrar los cuartos y luego gastarlos en su 'terra'" (qtd. in Murado 85).

barbaric, although they were useful for cheap labor and a laugh. Galicians were often hard-pressed to find solidarity from other groups that worked with them in menial jobs, as there seemed to be a hierarchy among these workers, and the *gallegos* were at the bottom of it.

The insulting stereotypes that Golden Age writers had propagated centuries ago remained and were even more extended. Nearly all publics, not just the bourgeoisie, could access popular literature, such as the low-cost *aleluyas*, which also ridiculed these unlucky northerners, even likening them physically and intellectually to animals (63-67). While the inhabitants of the historically poor southern region of Andalucía were romanticized, those of Galicia were ridiculed. García Castañeda explains that 19th-century popular literature often implicitly transmitted

el falso mensaje de una brillante España meridional de pandereta, dedicada al amor y a la holganza, y otra de la septentrional, trabajadora y menesterosa. Con el pasar del tiempo, estas imágenes estereotípicas se exageraron hasta llegar en ocasiones a lo esperpéntico. A desarrollarlas contribuyó no poco en la primera mitad del siglo XIX la actitud distanciada e irónica de los escritores de costumbres, de los cuales tan sólo algunos, como Enrique Gil, vieron con ecuanimidad y simpatía a las gentes del campo y fueron más allá del pintoresquismo literario y pictórico. (75-76)

Galicia's national revival, or *Rexurdimento*, brought about an increased nationalistic feeling within its own borders, yet, as we have seen, did little to change its image outside of its borders. I say “little”, not nothing, since to some extent Galicia's cultural renaissance did soften the profoundly negative vision of the region, due to the Romantic discovery of the landscape as well as the visibility in Spanish society of educated, urban middle or upper-class figures like Emilia Pardo Bazán, Rosalía de Castro and several Galician politicians in the Restoration.

Murado explains that “Del desprecio rayano en la animalización se pasó a un disgusto paternalista, mucho más moderado”, although this was only among the most cultured Spaniards (86). The 19th century was that of “los galleguitos”, as demonstrated by an 1877 Fernán Caballero story in which they speak a “comic” language and are ignorant, but not directly evil. Others, like Frenchman Alexandre Laborde, present *gallegos* as “prototypes of Rousseau’s noble Savage”. In Laborde’s account, they are “free of disordered pleasures” and “happy, drinking milk from their cows and eating cecina and rye bread and turnips” (qtd. in Murado 86). Again, these softened impressions were held primarily by cultured, middle-class Spaniards who could read what was being written about Galicia. For the vast majority of Spaniards, however, nothing about their perceptions of the land’s inhabitants had changed. After all, most of Spain had little contact with the far-off region, except with its poor laborers in Madrid, or via what they could read in these *costumbrista* accounts and *aleluyas*, which, as García Castañeda has demonstrated, was nearly always negative.

Although stereotypes of *gallegos* were certainly exaggerated and unfair, when not cruel, the region did indeed lag behind much of Spain. The introduction of corn and potato crops in the 18th century had significantly increased the problem of overpopulation, exacerbating the region’s misery. Banditry was a very real problem in the late 18th and in the 19th centuries, and while the 19th century cultural and literary revivals in Cataluña and the Basque country coincided with major industrial development that transformed both regions, Galicia was nearly untouched by the

industrial revolution. The region entered the 19th century “indebted, bankrupt, and with the ‘historical stigma’ of having assassinated their most successful businessman” (Murado 144).³⁵

The 19th century was a period of stagnation for all of Galicia, with rising population and a deterioration of conditions. Unlike Cataluña and the Basque country, but similar to other northern regions like Asturias and Cantabria, Galicia remained a poor farming land with a backward agricultural sector, not much different from its feudal system. Small individual farmsteads called *minifundios* were subdivided with each generation in order to pass the land, divided into *partixas*, onto each of the children.³⁶ Over the centuries, the plots were divided so much that they were too tiny to support families (Armas Diéguez 100). The constant division of the land and the simultaneous population growth was understandably a cause for misery. The parcels of land located near the Camino were, in 60-90% of the cases, “handkerchief plots” of less than half a hectare (about one acre), and only about 10% of the land could be classified as a “usable agricultural area”, as mountains and scrublands dominated so much of the landscape (101).

To make matters worse, famines plagued the region, such as the one Carr calls the “Irish famine” of 1853-4. The historian explains that the only cash product of the farmer in this time of famine was the cow or pig, but without railways (although other parts of Spain had them)

³⁵ Here Murado refers to the Marquis of Sargadelos, who attempted to introduce the industrial revolution to his land, but did so in such a tyrannical manner that the people lynched him and dragged his body through the streets. Experiments with industry were mostly unsuccessful for the vast majority of Galicians, but their agricultural system also left them in misery.

³⁶ Property was divided among all of the children in most of Galicia, although in some mountainous regions like Os Ancares, the *millora* (greatest part) was given only to the firstborn, male or female. The other children, unless they were able to marry another *millorado*, tended to emigrate (Armas Diéguez 100).

Galicians could not sell these products in large markets like Madrid or Barcelona. Nor could they sell their fish in these large markets, whereas Cataluña, connected to the rest of Spain by railways, could (Carr 10). Another problem for the region, and further proof that it had maintained much of the practices of the feudal system, was the use of *foros*, the feudal dues described earlier in the chapter. In fact, it was not until the 1920s that the Galician peasantry's obligation to pay *foros* was eliminated, long after this practice had disappeared in the rest of Spain. Nineteenth-century farmers were as devastated by this unjust system of land-holding as were the fifteenth-century farmers who revolted in the *Irmandiña* wars. At the end of the 1900s, in one *comarca*³⁷ 19,000 hectares were divided into 87,000 parcels, for an average parcel size of 0.2 hectares. These parcels were held by 10,000 different owners, which would average 1.9 hectares, or less than five acres per owner, although many had considerably less than the average (Murado 31). As Europe's population concentrated itself more in towns and cities, much of Galicia's population remained dispersed throughout the countryside. As late as 1931,³⁸ a French pilgrim writes of her conversations with villagers along the Camino, who tell her of the misery caused by the outdated system of *foros*, a practice that "crushes the farmer even if he is the owner of his own land" (Corthis 65).

As already poor conditions deteriorated in the 19th century, the best or the only option for many was emigration, a reality that has defined much of Galician history since the 16th century. Seasonal migration to Castilla and elsewhere for the harvest was common, but so was more

³⁷ *Comarca* could be translated roughly as "region", but here refers specifically to one of the regions into which Galicia is divided; today, there are eighteen *comarcas* in Galicia.

³⁸ However, by the time this pilgrim, André Corthis, published her book, *foros* had been eliminated by the Ley de Rendición de Foros (1926).

permanent migration to other parts of Spain and to the Americas.³⁹ Buenos Aires, Argentina, a destination of massive Galician emigration, is often referred to as the fifth Galician province⁴⁰ for its high population of *gallegos*, but this region's displaced natives and their descendants also have spread throughout the globe. Alfonso Castelao, one of the most important Galician intellectuals and artists in the region's history, once famously said, "Os galegos non protestan, emigran". In theory, they could protest through their right to vote. In practice, *caciismo*, present throughout Spain but particularly powerful in Galicia, made it almost pointless to bother. We saw earlier the tragic result of the masses' revolt against the nobility centuries before in the *Irmandiñas* wars, and other peasant vs. lord protests ended poorly for the former party. As a result of these harsh realities, transoceanic boats full of emigrants left the ports of Vigo and A Coruña daily between 1860 and 1930, and the number of Galicians who immigrated to the Americas in the 19th and 20th centuries was around two million. When one adds to this statistic all the Galicians who moved to Europe or industrialized cities in Spain in search of work from the 1950s on, the total number of emigrants in the last two centuries was close to that of the population of the entire community in the late 20th century (Rivas, *El bonsai* 48).

For those who did remain in their homeland, Galicia continued to be "despised by other Spaniards as a poor region where women worked as farm-labourers, as railway porters, and road menders", largely because so many men were forced to emigrate. The region had the highest illiteracy rate in the country in the 1800s, and its lack of modernization continued to present obstacles for the region's growth up through the 20th century (Carr 10). At the turn of the

³⁹ As mentioned above, regions like Asturias and Cantabria also faced similar difficulties in the 19th century, and therefore, like Galicia, lost many of their residents to emigration.

⁴⁰ The provinces of Galicia are A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra.

century, sixty-five percent of Galicians were still illiterate, and the only part of Spain less industrialized than Galicia was the Canary Islands (Rivas, *El bonsai* 49). Even the poor region of Extremadura surpassed Galicia, doubling its industrial participation per inhabitant, and Andalucía nearly quadrupled it (Murado 146). The land so commonly associated with backwardness did have some industry, but Galicians did not always benefit from it, as was the case with its profitable wolfram mines, controlled largely by Franco's brother-in-law, Ramón Serrano Súñer. The rural region's cows, potentially very profitable, were sent to slaughterhouses in Cataluña, just to cite one of many similar situations that harmed the already economically wounded region. These circumstances- isolation, lack of representation and industrialization - have much to do with the portrayals of Galicians, by Spaniards and foreigners alike, as backward.

As I discussed earlier, the northwestern corner of the Peninsula is not the only part of Spain that has repeatedly been subject to ridicule. Its northern neighbors were also the object of scorn in Madrid, where many of them had emigrated, and in 19th-century popular literature. Despite this stigma, however, other northern regions tend to fare better in the pilgrim accounts included in this study from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.⁴¹ George Borrow, an Englishman who traveled through Galicia and other regions in 1837 on a Bible-selling trip, was delighted with Cantabria as well as the neighboring region of Asturias, remarking that "an Asturian is fit company for a king, and is often of better blood" (308). His guide Antonio states, "I have nothing to say against the Asturians. [...] I have heard we may travel to one end of [Asturias] to

⁴¹ The exceptions here are the Basques in the accounts of the two English writers Richard Ford and George Borrow. The latter calls Basques excessively proud, "dull" and "very ignorant" (Borrow 336). I will discuss Ford's account later in this chapter.

the other without the slightest fear of being either robbed or ill-treated, which is not the case in Galicia, where we were always in danger of having our throats cut" (304). In contrast to his praise for the neighboring region, Antonio has plenty to say against Galicia. He warns Borrow about its inhabitants even before entering the territory, which he admits to never having visited:

the men in general seem clownish and simple, yet they are capable of deceiving the most clever filou of Paris; and as for the women, it is impossible to live in the same house with them, more especially if they are Camareras, and wait upon the Señora; they are continually breeding dissensions and disputes in the house. (226)

Upon entering Galicia, Borrow describes all of the men he encounters as "exceedingly ill-looking fellows, and very dirty" (*ibid*). His guide happens to know many of them, and assures Borrow that the men "are almost all robbers and assassins" (227). Borrow and Antonio meet other Gallegan bandits and "cut-throats" along the way on various occasions, prompting the author to label the land a "barbarous country" (230). Those who are not violent may very well be conniving, the Englishman finds, as nearly all of the Galicians whom Borrow hires to act as temporary guides deceive him in some way, such as an "uncouth" companion in Padrón (280).

In addition to wild and barbarous, Borrow finds Galicia to be extremely backward. He speaks of "the peculiar accent and uncouth enunciation of the Gallegans" (259), the "rude songs of Galicia" (261), and the "strange" Gallegan tongue, "with its half-singing half-whining accent, and with its confused jumble of words from many languages" (259). When his horse loses a shoe after tramping around in a muddy stable, the Englishman is flabbergasted to discover that there are no horseshoes to be found in Galicia, since there are no horses in the mountainous country. Borrow concludes, "A strange country this of Galicia" (228). He also observes that,

The villages were mostly an assemblage of wretched cabins; the roofs were thatched, dank, and moist, and not unfrequently covered with rank vegetation. There were dunghills before the doors, and no lack of pools and puddles. Immense swine were stalking about, intermingled with naked children. The interior of the cabins corresponded with their external appearance: they were filled with filth and misery. (231)

Borrow finds the more sparsely populated Finisterre, where curiously enough, they accuse him of being Carlos, pretender to the Crown, a “wild place” with “barbarous people” (285). The urban centers are not much better than the dirty villages or “savage” coast, and he denounces what he sees as ridiculous rivalries between cities like Vigo and A Coruña. In the medieval city of Betanzos, the atmosphere is “insupportably close and heavy” with “sour and disagreeable odours” and “filthy” streets and houses (237). Although the Englishman praises the “inconceivably delicious” countryside surrounding Pontevedra, the town itself is in decay, and there Borrow finds “more than the usual amount of Galician filth and misery”, in addition to a “wretched” posada and an innkeeper who is “a most intolerable scold and shrew” (256). The coastal city of A Coruña’s old town is “a desolate ruinous place” (240). The modern town is much more “agreeable”, although Luigi Pozzo, an Italian acquaintance of Borrow, complains for some time about the “frightful town of Coruña” (242). A Swiss friend in Santiago complains to Borrow about “the misery of Galicia”, its beggars and its “pigsties, which they call posadas” (248). Borrow describes Ferrol as “The grand naval arsenal of Spain, [which] has shared in the ruin of the once splendid Spanish navy,” noting that the people are mostly poor, and that even the once distinguished widows of former admirals beg in the streets. Although he also finds beauty there, the Bible salesman concludes that, “The misery and degradation of modern Spain are nowhere so strikingly manifested as at Ferrol” (292).

Like many other foreigners, Borrow finds the physical landscape of Galicia delightful, its hamlets and roads “beautiful and picturesque” (255), its brooks “purling” (229), and its summer evenings “delicious” (249). It is the people and their customs that are reproachable for this and other travelers. Borrow comments that the country is “by nature the richest in all Spain, and the most abundant”. Immediately afterwards, however, he insists, “the generality of the inhabitants are poor, but *they themselves are to blame, and not the country*” (235, italics mine). The lack of empathy in this last comment is rather striking, especially considering that Borrow is well-aware of the isolation, underrepresentation, famines, and other difficulties that rural Galicians endured, and particularly coming from someone who had spent as much time in Spain as Borrow, and therefore was at least somewhat informed of the region’s socioeconomic reality. Nevertheless, Borrow finds Spaniards who are as critical of the region as he is. A domestic servant from Andalucía, who is attending to an important southern family staying in the same inn in Lugo as Borrow, concurs that Galicia is both frightening and “horrible”, and relays to Borrow his master’s message that “we are come to this country for our sins” (235). The domestic complains about the penance of staying in “this fatal town of Lugo”, while he praises “the blessed country of Granada” (236).

Later, in Santiago, Borrow meets a bookseller who remarks of his own land, “Galicia is by nature the richest province in Spain, but the inhabitants are very stupid, and know not how to turn the blessings which surround them to any account; but as proof of what may be made out of Galicia, see how rich the Catalans become who have settled down here and formed establishments.” (250). Borrow walks through the city with the bookseller and notes, “Galicia is the only province of Spain where cases of leprosy are still frequent; a convincing proof this, that

the disease is the result of foul feeding, and an inattention to cleanliness, as the Gallegans, with regard to the comforts of life and civilized habits, are confessedly behind all the other natives of Spain" (252). In general, the English traveler paints a picture of a rainy, muddy, dreary, savage and frightening country with a dangerous and miserable population. Galicia, he declares, is "the wildest province of Spain" (274).

Borrow's countryman Richard Ford, who spent three years in Spain in the 1840s and recounts his travels in the three-volume *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home*, is even harsher in his assessment of Galicia, which he labels a "cul de sac corner of routine and ignorance" (v 2, 966). Ford goes on to explain that, "The presence of the apostle at his star-paved city, Compostela, has done nothing in enlightening his chosen province, which his priests, barring fireworks, seem to have sedulously preserved in impenetrable obscurantismo" (ibid.). Like Borrow, Ford admits the natural wealth of the region, but finds little else positive, commenting that, "The contrast between the backward ignorance and poverty of the peasants is painfully striking; art, science, and literature languish, where the olive and orange flourish, and rich wines are produced" (v2, 963). Not only does Ford find Galician peasants uncultured; they are practically animals. They work constantly, manage to survive with little more than low-quality bread, and live in damp, dirty cottages alongside their animals and rampant vermin. Ford explains that in Madrid, "the term *Gallego* is synonymous with a boor, *ganapan*, or a 'hewer of wood and drawer of water', the biblical expression for the over-worked" (v2, 964), and that, "These white niggers frequently wear shoes *Madreñas*" (sic) which is "another proof of their being only fit to be beasts of burden" (ibid). Describing the women who are forced to do all of the work when the men emigrate, the English writer says of the *Gallegas*,

A fare as hard as their work, coupled with exposure to an uncongenial climate, nips their beauty in the bud; few, indeed, are born good-looking, or even retain their charms long; they are aged before thirty, and then look as if they never could have been young, or had anything of the feminine gender; they resemble mummies or cats which have been found starved behind a wainscot, things of skin, bone and fur (v2, 965).

The men, meanwhile, are “boorish and rude, seldom giving a direct answer; seen in their wretched huts, they are scarcely better than their ancestors, who were little better than beasts” (ibid). These wretched, animal-like people speak a “patois, harsh and uncouth to the ear”, and “Their wrong-headed litigious character has long been a butt to other Spaniards, who think it almost hopeless to attempt to prove them” (v2, 966). I could continue with similar remarks, but a few lines suffice to capture Ford’s impression of Galicia and its inhabitants.⁴² On the other hand, the people of the bordering region of Asturias are “kind, civil, and well-mannered, especially the women” (v2, 1035). Unlike the Galician females whom he likens to mummies or starved cats, even the humblest peasant *Asturianas* look lovely when “drest in their best” with fine bodices and pretty handkerchiefs, and their “best qualities of the heart have never been corrupted” (ibid.). Although Ford recognizes that Asturians and Galicians are both poor, “hardly-worked and ill-fed” (v2, 1036), he emphasizes in the former the best traits of a poor land, such as the simplicity of its people, while focusing on and criticizing the ugliest, most dismal aspects of poverty in the latter. Similarly, Ford has only positive words for the brave, temperate and simple Navarrese, who have “few wants and few vices” (v3, 1476).

⁴² It is important to note, as I mentioned earlier, that Galicia is not the only region judged harshly by Richard Ford. The writer has a very negative opinion of the Basques as well as the Catalans, who are the “curse and weakness of Spain” and “the spoilt child of the Peninsular family” (v2, 691); the Aragonese, who are “disagreeable” and “as hard headed, hearted and bowelled as the rocks of the Pyrenees” (v3, 1415) and others. British author T.A. Layton calls Ford’s *Handbook* “abusive and self-opinionated” (163) and questions the veracity of some of the information Ford published (165-66).

Early 20th century pilgrims

More than half a century later, when world war and other strife kept most pilgrims away from the Road to Santiago, the American Georgianna Goddard King made the pilgrimage on horseback and foot and left us with, among a wealth of other information, her impressions of Galicia just before 1920. Although King's account of Galicia is not nearly as negative as that of Ford, it is safe to say that the passion the Bryn Mawr professor displays for the art on the Camino has little to do with her feelings towards the *gallegos*. In general, she finds the Gallegan peasants to be quasi-slaves or work animals: weather-beaten, unattractive, helpless, dulled from excessive work, superstitious out of ignorance, often uncharitable and hostile, yet not always malicious.

King focuses primarily on the churches and monuments she encounters, which are her principal objects of study as an Art History professor, but has a condescending attitude when talking about Galicians. Her mix of scorn and indifference for these people is nonetheless occasionally tempered by affection for a kind individual whom she encounters, or compassion for the peasants' harsh existence. King does find "good souls" in Puerto Marín (v2, 450), as well as three "lovely" sisters who are quite kind to the foreigner (v2, 421). Despite these few exceptions, King finds most Gallegan towns to be uncharitable and rather drab, as is the case with Triacastela, "Forgetful of the world that has forgotten it, long since, it languishes along the years" (v2, 413). She notes the fields of hay, corn, cabbage, cattle and pigs, and remarks, "The people seemed not too sadly poor; though frugal, not undernourished; but the dirt was everywhere, as indeed it must be where pigs frequent the street" (*ibid.*). Their language, *galego*, sounds "dull and rough" to her, although she says it used to be, in medieval times, much more

pleasant (v2, 472). King is similarly unimpressed with the character of the natives. In one female villager she observes “mistrust passing rapidly into active hostility” (v2, 438), and rides away from the woman “aware that an evil eye was following” (v2, 440). Although her reasons for doing the Camino are scholarly, not religious, and therefore she is not a true pilgrim in the traditional sense, King seems insulted when the villagers of Samos, “with true religious indifference”, refuse her and her guide refreshment or lodging (v2, 415). She seems to feel entitled to the locals’ charity, even though she sees that these peasants have little left to share with others. King describes the “colossal” monastery of Samos as, “unrighteous, unapostolic, and unkind”, noting that all of the three houses she deemed possible places of rest for travelers refused her lodging (v2, 416). In Sarria children “hooted” at the foreign woman, and the “Young men in the streets were as insolent as the children had been” (v2, 421). Although she does stumble upon “a little rectory maid [who] was the very virtue of charity”, just as soon as this maid has been obliged to return to her kitchen chores, King dismisses the town as “impossible” and sets off for the road (v2, 424).

The Galicians’ physical appearance and customs are as unappealing as their character in King’s account. She refers to them on one occasion as “mild-faced, ox-eyed Gallegans” (v3, 24). In Arzúa, the people wear mostly “weather-beaten black” and “The faces too were weather-beaten, relieved only by the occasional pleasant comeliness in the girls” (v2, 486). The men of Galicia, she reports, are

strong and laborious; they are said to supply porters to most of Spain. The women, left at home, do men’s work, in the field, on the farm, in the village. They are capable, as we say in New England, but their priests and their husbands have them strictly in subjection; they are said to keep up the grossest superstitions and their husbands are said to beat them. In

consequence, they unite the strength of a man to the irresponsibility of a child. At Compostela, in the church, they would go through a crowd like rowdy small boys, by sheer strength of shoving with muscular elbows and trampling with heavy shoes. A little different racially from other Spanish women, they have not their sentiment, and have nothing to take its place (v2, 486).

King specifies that she speaks here of “the working women, fishwives and farmers,” and not of the middle classes, although at times she is also surprised at the better-off villagers, such as the time she sees a group of them, each wearing a “hideous kerchief, untidy and unbecoming, made in German factories of sham silk, that with washing, or fading, or soiling, was usually some shade of drab” (v2, 436). King also adds that, despite her above impression of the *Gallegas* as a group, “I found them, taken individually, kind invariably, sensible, and indifferent” (v2, 486). She feels compassion for the peasants who are mistreated by shopkeepers in Arzúa, but is outraged by the poor conditions in which she finds the animals at the cattle mart there, and remarks, “It is not that the Gallegans are particularly cruel, they are simply unimaginative: and then, they are helpless too, hardworked and dulled” (v2, 488). Despite this statement, which seems to explain in part the villagers’ treatment of animals, the professor concludes, “There in Arzúa I had no wish to photograph men and women on their knees before hideous wooden crosses on the churchyard wall. A religion that cannot find water for cattle seemed not a negative good but a positive evil” (v2, 490). She also notes that these religious people are very superstitious, especially near Finisterre, where spells are still used (v3, 222-244).

Not long after King traveled the Road to Santiago, four college students from Madrid set out from the capital en route to the apostolic city in 1926. The young men were a part of a much reduced group of pilgrims who made the pilgrimage that Holy Year, during the dictatorship of

Miguel Primo de Rivera. Javier Martín Artajo records the group's experiences decades later in *Caminando a Compostela* (1976), in which he relates that all four students were delighted with "la dulce y suave Galicia", which the author likens to walking through "un parque natural sin límites" (89-90). The account is more positive than those we have seen so far. The author encounters stunning scenery and kind-hearted villagers: "Los vecinos de El Corgo nos alargaron un porrón de tinto, amarguillo, al estilo de Fefiñanes, y bebimos y charlamos a placer con aquellos aldeanos, acostumbrados a tratar con familiaridad a los peregrinos del Apóstol" (96). He learns a few words of the "suave hablar gallego", which he remembers as "dulces y mimosas" (ibid). At the same time, the Madrilenian's account also reveals, albeit with compassion and without a hint of the ridicule of Borrow, Ford and others, the harsh existence of rural Galicians. For example:

En el campo trabajan, sobre todo, las mujeres; con largas azadas o con pequeñas escardadoras mullen la tierra sin cesar. Los hombres buscan jornal en las obras públicas o marchan a las Américas a probar fortuna; quedan las mujeres al cuidado de la heredad; cuentan con la ayuda de las vaquinas rubias [...] las pobres mujeres las miman más que a sí mismas, ahorrándoles todo esfuerzo a costa del suyo; va delante la rapaza, llevándoles del ramal, y detrás la mujer, poniendo en el empuje todas sus fuerzas para que ellas- las vacas- tengan menos que tirar; estos trabajos, tan duros, hacen envejecer pronto a las campesinas gallegas; ellas saben que cuando no puedan sostener la mancera tendrán una rueca en la mano y acompañarán a las vacas, hilando, mientras comen, ya que no pueden ayudarles a trabajar. (102)

He also mentions that near Arzúa, thirty-five kilometers outside of Santiago, the houses are blackened, the *hórreos*⁴³ look like funerary monuments, and “los chiquillos, rubiales en su mayoría, no quieren nada con el jabón” (103). Unlike virtually every other account before him, however, Martín Artajo does have a few kind words to say about young Galician women, especially “el meloso hablar de las muchachas lucences, que por poco causan víctimas entre los peregrinos” (101). His account of Galicia is the most positive one we have seen so far, although it is also worth pointing out that the author speaks very well of all of the regions and peoples along the Camino, hardly ever venturing a word that could be construed as criticism.

A French poet, writer and pilgrim gives us another look at Galicia in this period. André Corthis⁴⁴ published *Peregrinaciones por España* in 1931, in which she presents a Galicia that is “triste y bella” as well as primitive (10). Like Martín Artajo, Corthis notes the region’s lack of modernization and its poverty, as well as its scarce and poorly kept roads and its general isolation (72). The green region strikes her as different from the rest of Spain, “la España del sol y de las mulas furiosas”; instead Galicia is “la de las lluvias frecuentes y los tranquilos carros de bueyes” (58). She begins her pilgrimage to Compostela in the city of A Coruña, and paints a picture of a mysterious land of deep forests and barefoot women who shout the *Altruxa*, “antiguo grito celta, grito de guerra de otros tiempos, de desafío” (12). The following passage illustrates the French pilgrim’s vision of the land:

⁴³*Hórreos* are granaries usually made of stone or wood. They are raised from the ground by pillars, which then have flat stones beneath them, in order to keep rodents from reaching the food that is stored inside the granaries. These structures appear throughout northern Spain, but have become a symbol of Galicia in particular.

⁴⁴ André Corthis is a pseudonym for Andrée Magdeleine Husson, whose married name was Andrée Lécuyer.

Es un humilde y dulce pueblo, este pueblo de Galicia que camina con los pies desnudos. Sobre él, el tiempo que pasa, cambiando la historia y las almas, no parece haber pasado. Con semblantes serios y rudos y resignados, sus cuerpos fuertes, sus ojos siguiendo un sueño, estos hombres y estas mujeres son tales como los representan las pinturas muy antiguas, las viejas tablas ingenuas, tales como debieron de ser sobre esta misma tierra, al borde de este mismo río Sar, los labradores estupefactos que veían nacer estrellas en los montes oscuros del Libredón. (58-59)

The Parisian initially assumes a paternalistic view of Galicians, describing them as a primitive yet innocent *pueblo*. After passing through the countryside, the author arrives in Santiago de Compostela, where she is delighted to have the chance to carefully observe large groups of locals who have travelled to the city for market day. It is not clear with whom she is conversing in the following passage, but what is clear is her evaluation of the backwardness of the villages from which these vendors hail;

-¿En estas aldeas, deben de vivir como en el siglo XVIII?

-Querrá usted decir como en el siglo XVI. ¡Y aún! ¿Sabe usted, por ejemplo, que el arado que emplean es el llamado romano, sin la menor modificación?

The author then continues, referring to the *carreta gallega*,

Al ver rodar por las plazas de la ciudad los pesados vehículos de ruedas macizas con llantas de hierro, de lanza fija, me pregunté inútilmente en qué podría ser más primitivo, el que los discípulos engancharon, para transportar el cuerpo de su maestro, a los amansados toros de 'madame' Lupa. (60-61)

Corthis' paternalistic vision acquires a condescending air as she describes the peasants. The men are "siempre silenciosos, siempre con calmosos ademanes" and the French pilgrim notes, "Estos hombres no son más dueños de sus gestos que lo fueron los árboles de su crecimiento y de su

muerte. Obran, se mueven inconscientemente" (61- 62). As she observes these men, a train from Vigo arrives full of female fish vendors. The following passage describes the women, all of them with heavy baskets balanced on their heads:

las infelices oscilan y tiemblan como a punto de caer. No se les ve la cara, oculta por el saco con que protegen su cabeza y sus espaldas. Otro saco desgarrado les sirve de falda. Así, todos iguales, corren la una detrás de la otra; corren como para poder sostenerse hasta el fin, como para acabar antes; *corren, casi irreales en su terrible realidad, oscuras, informes*, las piernas y los brazos desnudos mojados por el barro que salta, el agua que cae y por la sangre que mana de los grandes peces muertos. (63, italics mine)

The author is clearly aware of the poverty and sad plight of the peasants, but shows little compassion, and comes across as somewhat cold, in these and other passages. She does, however, try to understand the “humble” wood splitters and fish vendors whose backs are curved from carrying excessive weight. She recalls that in her first days in Galicia she was surprised to hear the constant repetition of “¡Pobre Galicia!” everywhere; in conversations, in books and in songs. She asks the locals why they say that their land is poor, as its beautiful forests, hills and streams are lovely, especially when compared to “sandy” Castilla. A Galician man tells her of the misery of his region, explaining that the land is very good, but poorly, “primitively” worked, and adds, “No tenemos vías férreas, no tenemos carreteras....El Gobierno está lejos...¿qué le vamos a hacer? Cataluña le inspira miedo porque grita muy alto...Pero Galicia es humilde; Galicia se resigna....Por eso no se ocupa de nosotros....Y después están los *foros*” (64). The erudite French pilgrim, after these conversations, softens her attitude towards the locals. She reports her visits to the nearby villages with fondness:

Yo no he encontrado en ninguna parte el equivalente de esa cortesía perfecta de que dan prueba allá las gentes del más bajo pueblo....He podido pasearme solo por los más miserables arrabales. Alrededor de las casas bajas, cuevas en las que no se puede entrar sino doblándose en dos, se seca una corteza picada que hace la tierra, negra, de color de miseria. Los puercos gruñen en la calle y se refugian en el fondo de las habitaciones abiertas. Los niños van vestidos con una simple camisa hecha jirones. Las mujeres, en el umbral de las puertas, peinan sus largos cabellos o se despiojan con cuidado....Nunca he sorprendido la carcajada que insulta, la palabra grosera [...] Y si preguntaba el camino, el más sordido mendigo, sabía responder galanamente, cuando se lo agradecía, -Esto no vale un gracias. (67)

La Sociedad de los Coros Gallegos later puts on a performance for the author, complete with their regional dance, the *muñeira*, and the music of a *gaita* (bagpipe). Corthis thoroughly enjoys the event and praises the performers. These, in turn, thank the foreigner profusely for her kind words, so much that the pilgrim is puzzled. She concludes that perhaps the performers are so thankful, “Simplemente, creo yo, por haber intentado comprenderlos y haberlo logrado un poco” (71).

Even the majority of pilgrims who are critical of the rest of Galicia praise the beauty and magic of the medieval city of Santiago, but this is not the case with Corthis. While the humble laborers win her over, the apostolic city fails to move the Parisian. Its cathedral is “una desilusión” (17); its famous statue of the apostle is rather ugly and “hasta un poco ridículo”, and the famous *Pórtico da Gloria* is “chillón, insopportable” just to cite a few of the adjectives she employs (18-19). The Frenchwoman complains that unlike other Spanish cities, where the great *casas señoriales* are maintained, the Galician city has nothing but convents, or former convents (27). The *Hospital de Reyes* still maintains its “primitive” role, but the great *Palacio de Gelmírez*

is nothing like it used to be; its broken arches are remnants of a more glorious era, and “las palomas anidan donde cenaron los reyes” (51). We will recall that Corthis published her account in 1931, and therefore visited Spain at a turbulent moment of her history, in which it is likely that little attention was paid to the upkeep of the sacred city, also a period in which the numbers of pilgrims was very low. The French writer’s account also is interesting in that, rather than limiting her commentary to her personal impressions of the region, she includes the Galicians’ own explanation of their social and political reality. She goes beyond expressing compassion for their poverty and actually tries to understand the reasons behind it, a rare trait in the pilgrim accounts that we have seen thus far.

Postwar pilgrimages

Pilgrim narratives from the late 1930s and early 40s are very scarce, for obvious reasons. What are available from this period are several Jacobean studies, such as that of Huidobro y Serna, mentioned in Chapter 1. The following is taken from this three-volume compilation, which although it is not a pilgrim account like most of the others we have seen, is nonetheless interesting in its depiction of Galicia, specifically of Pico Sacro:

Desde arriba se gozan los ojos en el panorama gallego de la cuenca del río, que ha vestido la falda del monte con el verde oscuro de los pinos, el verde claro de los maizales, el verde alegre de los prados mimosos, que el agua mantiene frescos para vida y recreo de los buenos aldeanos que en pobres casitas, sembradas sin molestia de urbanización, pasan sus días tranquilos cuidando de aquellas tierras risueñas y de aquellos ganados pacíficos. (235)

The day-to-day life of the “buenos aldeanos” the author describes, like that of most Spaniards in the difficult postwar years in which this was written, was likely anything but “tranquilo”, which highlights the author’s paternalistic attitude toward the villagers. As we may recall, Huidobro y Serna’s *Las peregrinaciones jacobeas* won Franco’s award for the best Jacobean history. For the dictator’s regime, these humble Galicians, and other peasant farmers, were “the true embodiment of the values of the Nationalistic Crusade as against the urban worker corrupted by Marxism” (Carr 740). Franco’s economic policies would insure that the “crusade” continued, at least temporarily. These policies led to a re-ruralization of Galicia in the 1950s, with a rural population of 70% at the beginning of the decade, while the rest of Spain averaged around 50% (Murado 148). Again, these rural workers were good for Francoist Spain and its agenda, with the exception of a few who threatened

el santo y bendito regionalismo bien entendido, el regionalismo según Menéndez y Pelayo, que consiste en no perder las regiones sus características regionales que forman ‘la unidad suprema y la diversidad fecunda de la historia patria’; el regionalismo sano que predicen Balmes o Vázquez Mella y que sentimos patrióticamente los españoles, que con todas las bellezas regionales hacemos el ramo de flores para adornar la hermosa túnica de la Madre España..., había comenzado a sufrir una desviación *peligrosa* en manos de un reducido grupo de gallegos, que entonces y años después hablaron de *un nacionalismo absurdo y de un estatuto para reír*” (289, italics mine).

The “laughable statute” mentioned is, of course, the 1936 statute of autonomy whose ratification was made impossible by the outbreak of civil war. In these and other comments, Franco’s award-winning account on the pilgrimage presents an idealized, paternalistic view of Galician peasants and ridicules their aspirations for self-rule.

Speaking of Fascist leaders, the Belgian politician León Degrelle (1906-1994), founder of the Rexist Party⁴⁵ and a Lieutenant Coronel of the Walloon division of the Waffen-SS, was a pilgrim in the postwar years. Degrelle sought exile in Spain after the fall of Nazi Germany in 1945 and was later sentenced to death in absentia for treason in Belgium, although this sentence was never executed thanks to his protection by Francoist Spain. He completed the pilgrimage alone in 1951, around the same time he figured as a prominent member in neo-Nazi movements in Spain and elsewhere. The anti-Semitic politician was also anything but fond of Galicians. The dozens of letters he wrote to another leader of the Rexist party during his pilgrimage were published posthumously in *Mi Camino de Santiago* in 1996. His letters speak of horrible roads, disgusting food, and filthy inns throughout Galicia. The following is one of several descriptions of the lodging, this time in Triacastela:

El cuartucho no era más que un zaquizamí con los muros completamente negros por la humedad. Ni siquiera había en él la cubeta de agua de las otras. Es preciso lavarse en el corredor, junto a toda la tribu. La entrada es por la cuadra—ésto es clásico—; la subida había que hacerla por una escalera que se movía, cubierta de guarrierías e invadida de gallinas. Así es el pequeño palacio que te describo, pero, aún así, es el mejor en treinta kilómetros a la redonda. (111-112)

A few days later he claims that he is forced to leave an inn at three in the morning, as he can no longer stand the black fleas that invade his bed. “Una covacha”, “una infecta leonera”, and “nauseabundo” are just some of the descriptions he gives of lodging along the Galician leg of the Way (122).

⁴⁵ Degrelle founded the Rexist Party, a Fascist movement that sought the moral renewal of Belgian society, in 1930. Rexist was an ultra-Catholic ideology supported by many French-speaking Belgians, or Walloons (including Degrelle).

The Belgian, who would later live in Málaga until his death, loves the region's beautiful, “poético” landscape and the city of Santiago, but finds everything else about Galicia, particularly the people, repulsive. He describes them as ignorant, inhospitable, greedy, and xenophobic (irony noted), and writes, “La raza es grave, como ya lo debía ser hace diez siglos; raza laboriosa, áspera, austera” (128). He informs the recipient of his letters that, “Estas gentes rudimentarias están mentalmente en la edad de las cavernas y de los uros” (117). Later, when passing several families of harvesters resting from their work to share a loaf of bread, he is indignant at receiving no offer to join: “¡pero ni uno solo ha sido capaz de invitarme!” (120). Degrelle often has difficulty finding his way and is forced to ask “uno u otro ‘pastorcillo’ ignorante” for directions, which he claims are always intentionally inaccurate due to the locals’ distrust of foreigners. In one letter he furiously recounts the six-kilometer detour that these faulty directions force him to take through “horrific”, practically impassible roads that the rain had turned into a swamp (111). He is also convinced that Galicians along the Camino constantly swindle him for food and lodging, and notes with sarcasm that at least the spider webs in the rooms are free (112). Even finding these “infested” rooms is an ordeal. In one letter, the incredulous pilgrim insists that the villagers are so afraid of foreigners that he had to have a policeman intervene and convince an innkeeper to give him lodging (117). Most of Galicia, the Nazi pilgrim concludes, lives “en plena Edad Media”, and in “falta absoluta de higiene y resultado de la cohabitación ‘fraternal’ de personas y animales” (126, 129). León Degrelle’s letters reveal no hint of compassion for the poverty-stricken rural villagers he encounters, nor even a mention that their “backwardness” is a result of their misery, their tiny lots of land, or other visible problems.

After having saved one of the “worst” accounts for last, I will close the chapter with a much more positive assessment from a far less controversial figure. American travel author Clara E. Laughlin noted in her 1931 travel guide to Spain some of the backwardness in Galicia that previous pilgrims have described, but she also saw much more. Laughlin gives a premonition of what was to come for the region, saying:

This Galician country is bound to become, very soon, a great holiday ground for Europeans and Americans who delight in magnificent scenery combined with some novelty in local characteristics. It has been called ‘the Switzerland of Spain,’ and some day it may become as cosmopolitan, in its tourist ‘crop’, as Switzerland is now. But for a few years, at least, those who go there will enjoy not only the beauty and interest of a gorgeous section, but the feeling that all confirmed travelers love, of having ‘discovered’ possibilities long before they became too much vaunted. (Laughlin 441)

While this would not quite happen “very soon”—Spain was about to be devastated by a bloody civil war, years of hunger and international isolation —this American traveler was right. In Chapter 4 we will see what late 20th-century travelers “discovered” in Galicia.

Chapter 4: Galicia in Modern Pilgrim Accounts

Destino singular el de este rincón de tierra, adonde el extranjero en otros tiempos venía desde tan lejos, y desde donde se va ahora tan lejos hacia el extranjero. ¿Qué sueños, qué deseos, qué esperanzas continúan trayendo sobre este país el Océano que le muerde tan profundamente, el viento que le atraviesa y tantas brumas errantes? (Corthis 65-66)

The region put on the world map by Santiago's tomb had yet to become a “vaunted” spot, in the words of Laughlin, several decades later. A melancholic Castelao wrote the famous lines, “Soy hijo de una patria desconocida”, which would appear in his *Sempre en Galiza* (1944) from his New York apartment in exile, but the same was true in Spain. Galicia remained unknown territory for many Spaniards in the mid-20th century, such as Ernesto Giménez Caballero, who wrote in 1947,

Todo el resto de los españoles que no somos gallegos estamos de acuerdo en que el más inexplicable de España es este país noroestico que se viene llamando Galicia. A la gente de meseta arriba, que nos gustan las cosas claras, las líneas rectas y el cielo fulgido como el diamante, nunca terminamos de resolver en qué reside *la incógnita gallega*. (11, italics mine)

As we have seen, a little over a decade later the same could hardly be said for Spain's Mediterranean coast, vacation destination extraordinaire in the tourist boom of the 1960s. Yet, greater prosperity for most Spaniards and the subsequent social changes in the 1960s and '70s arrived suddenly. Many Spaniards wanted a temporary escape from their materialist, increasingly busy and often urban modern societies. This is why Carr and Fusi explain,

By the 1970s car-borne Spaniards from the cities were visiting the remote, poverty-stricken hamlets of Galicia as tourists in search of the picturesque remnants of some self-sufficient pre-capitalist society. That these hamlets should have roads at all would have astounded their inhabitants in 1940; but that their lot was still one of relentless labour on land which yielded miserable rewards and that, apart from butane stoves and tractors, the advance of the consumer society had meant little to their lives, showed that the ‘two Spains’ of poverty and relative prosperity persisted. (64)

Galicia, with its damp green countryside, had always been “different” from most of Spain, but never more so than in the 1970s, when much of the region remained essentially the same just as other parts of the nation changed rapidly. In 1960, Lugo was the poorest province in the country, and Vizcaya, in the Basque country, was the richest (Riquer i Permanyer 264). Javier Martín Artajo, the Madrilenian who walked the Road as a college student in 1926, followed the same route by car with his son in 1954, and again in 1976. Five decades after his first trip, he found the Galician countryside “tan linda como siempre, pero que no da muestras de haber progresado demasiado” (Martín Artajo 115). During Álvaro Cunqueiro’s 1962 car trip along the Camino, he found the inhabitants of several villages still living in the same *pallozas* as they had for centuries, and electricity had yet to arrive to several of these “aldeas perdidas en las cumbres” (50-51). Part of the reason that tourists could find something resembling “remnants of some self-sufficient pre-capitalist society” in Galicia was that the Franco regime encouraged this. In Chapter 3 we saw that Galicia had been re-ruralized in the 1950s due to the dictator’s economic policies, which were disastrous for the region’s industry. As the northwestern corner of the Peninsula has always been located off of the main land trade routes, its economy developed “in a dependent mode” with emphasis on raw materials, such as wood and granite, that could be

processed elsewhere. Francoist development plans reinforced this model, adding massive hydroelectric schemes to provide power for the industrialization of other Spanish regions, while Galicia remained an overwhelmingly rural community. Surely not in these plans was a scheme for the *caudillo*'s home region to provide *manpower* for the industrial growth of the 1960s and '70s in cities like Madrid or Barcelona. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, this was precisely what happened, leading to a progressive depopulation of the countryside (Keating 14).

Still, this new phenomenon of rapid population shift did not mean that other centuries-old realities would change. Isolation, for example, remained an obstacle even in the late twentieth century. The railway from Madrid did not reach Galicia until 1883, much later than other regions, and a century later, if we substitute “highway” for “railway”, history repeats itself. Travel by automobile from the Galician coast to Madrid was long, with through-town traffic and slow, difficult roads through the mountainous areas of the border with León, until fairly recently, when the *Autovía A-6* was extended to A Coruña and other parts of Galicia in the mid-1990s. As in the case of the railroad, Galicia’s direct freeway access to Madrid came later than that of other regions. Other components of infrastructures were poorly developed at the time of the transition, including railways, ports, airports and telecommunications (Keating 14). Even today, despite major improvements, this trend has not changed entirely. While residents of Valencia, Barcelona, Sevilla, Málaga, Zaragoza, Valladolid, and smaller cities like Palencia or Huesca have the luxury of taking the high-speed AVE train (Alta Velocidad Española) to Madrid, drastically reducing their travel time to the capital, no such service exists for Galicians. Previously set to be ready for 2009, the date for an AVE to Galicia was pushed back to 2012, then to the end of 2015, and there

was even talk of delays until 2018. As I write this chapter, there are plans for a Galician AVE by the end of 2015.

All of these factors contributed to 1970s Galicia being a “place where tourists came to inspect a primitive society” (Carr 753). Pilgrims accounts from this time period further substantiate this claim. The famous American writer James A. Michener, author of several travel books in addition to his many novels, explained in the late 1960s that O Cebreiro, an “extraordinary village” with “low thatch-roofed houses unmodified since the days of the earliest Celts” was “maintained in modern Spain as *a memorial* to the manner in which hill Spaniards *used to live*” (753, italics mine). Similarly, British writer Edwin Mullins called Cebreiro in 1976 “a memorial to a vanishing Spain” (192). Long derided for its lack of progress and development, Galicia was suddenly valued for this very same characteristic. Galician differentiation from the rest of Spain became celebrated, rather than ridiculed, as “traditional” Spain seemed to be quickly fading away. In this chapter I will examine several facets of the region’s new image.

Precious primitivity: Galicia as a land frozen in time

This new, considerably more positive assessment of the region emerges in several late 20th-century pilgrim accounts, especially in the 1990s and after, although it began to surface in several accounts from the 1960s and 70s. A new crop of guidebooks and histories on the Camino appeared in preparation for the 1965 Holy Year, an event that, as I mentioned earlier, was vigorously promoted. One of these accounts is Gaspar Gómez de la Serna’s *Del Pirineo a Compostela: Nueva Guía del Camino de Santiago* (1965), in which the Spanish author calls Galicia “primitiva y pobre”, as well as “tan arcaica que aún se ven mujeres hilando la lana con el

viejo huso de otra edad y sus canciones son tan antiguas que conservan el viejísimo alalá de Cebreiro” (229). Unlike King’s account, Gómez de la Serna’s describes the region’s “primitive” nature with admiration rather than aversion. Other accounts from the same year praise Galicia’s towns, such as Portomarín, “uno de los pueblos más pintorescos de la ruta, duerme un sueño de venideros siglos” (Vizcaíno 333) and the “apacible y grata” city of Lugo (337).

These and many other foreign (non-Galician) writers from the 1960s and especially in following decades often idealize representations of a traditional culture and emphasize a rural Galicia frozen in time. British writer, filmmaker and automobile “pilgrim” Edwin Mullins says of Lavacolla in 1976, “The unstable footbridge is new, otherwise I imagine the scene has changed little in a thousand years” (196). In the 1990s, American pilgrim Jack Hitt passed through small villages outside of O Cebreiro, where he saw old men with ox-powered carts and notes that, “As they did in the Middle Ages, the old women gather at the town fountain [sic] to wash clothes in the early warmth of the sun” (212-213). Hitt finds in these small villages near the Galicia-Castilla-León border “rocky soil covered in a morning mist, unchanged since creation” (212). Conrad Rudolph, an American professor of medieval art, agrees that O Cebreiro has a “general feeling of existing in another time” (104). Similar impressions of the 1073 meters-high village as an enchanting place whose lofty, remote location seems to have somehow rendered it immune to the passing of centuries are very frequent.⁴⁶ Nearly all pilgrims, in the 20th century and earlier, describe its landscape, *pallozas* (pre-Roman dwellings) and *castros* (circular constructions believed to be Celtic/pre-Roman remains), which differentiate it from previous towns passed on the pilgrimage route. While earlier pilgrims (mid-20th century and before) were

⁴⁶ However, numerous accounts, such as Lee Hoinacki’s, feel that there is too much effort to keep the village this way, and that as a result it is losing its authenticity.

shocked to see *pallozas* still in use, and some saw this as further proof of the region's backwardness, contemporary pilgrims find them enchanting, and even "absolutely adorable" (Kerkeling 290).

The authors also find other parts of Galicia to be charming remnants of the past. Camino scholars Linda Kay Davidson and David Gitlitz inform the readers of their *Complete Cultural Handbook* that on the road from Melide to Arzúa, "Many of the smaller hamlets preserve their ancient—or at least pre-modern—rural Galician atmosphere. You will see palleiros (haylofts for cattle); the straw-covered huts called pallotes; and outside ovens for cooking cornbread (brona). You may see oxen pulling a cart with wood wheels and axles" (334). Other pilgrims do record seeing such "pre-modern" culture, much to their delight. Thomas Arthur Layton, who does the pilgrimage by car in the mid-1970s, recalls in detail the cattle fair he attended in Melide, commenting, "The scene that presented itself was the most rural, the most Spanish, the most animated that I ever remember witnessing in that country, primitive but not impoverished" (161). Layton was completely intrigued by the event and by the small, extremely old-fashioned looking charabanc that some villagers had used to transport themselves and their cattle to the fair (162). American novelist Kathryn Harrison, who did the Camino at the turn of the current millennium, found Galicia to be "so quaint, so medieval, so anti-postmodern" (136). Another American who did the pilgrimage in the 2000s was Conrad Rudolph, who on his way to Finisterre found himself in "a countryside so beautiful that there was a palpable sense of enchantment, a place far from anywhere, a land that seemed to have been wholly untouched by time" (41). He saw beautiful fields and "a large arched gateway, such as I had never seen before, as if the remnant of some now-vanished golden age of prosperity" (Rudolph 42). The American professor even called the

segment of the French Road from León to Santiago, which includes the whole official Galician route, “one of the regions of Western Europe least touched by modern times and among the most beautiful of the entire trip” (Rudolph 103).

In the mid-1990s, American pilgrim Lee Hoinacki was looking precisely for the region least touched by modern times, and found it at the end of his trip. Hoinacki was truly delighted to see shepherds, their flocks, a villager with an oxen-pulled cart, and a donkey pulling a wagonload of hay. He remarks with a mix of both wonder and relief that these villagers are evidence that “not all Spanish farmers are totally mechanized”; in other words, the “modern world” has not yet tainted the beautiful land completely (232). Hoinacki ponders this rural Galician life and finds it incompatible with “that other world” of highways he passed only days before, the world of machines and “disturbing” odors from factories (241). This other-worldly characteristic makes the paths through Galicia “more appealing, more attractive, than ever” for Hoinacki, who is even “delighted” with the “charm” of an old *lavadero* and grateful to be able to use it instead of the hostels’ washing machines (232, 253).

These types of accounts depict a simpler way of life rural Galicia (as well as the Camino in general) as superior to, and an escape from, the modern urban life from which most pilgrims hail. Hoinacki explains it as a cleansing experience, “I needed the daily ascetic exercise [of the Camino] to rid my sensibility of all the artificial, pseudo-experiences of sense to which one is exposed in contemporary mainstream living” (235). The escape from this “contemporary mainstream living” is not only to a physical place on the map; it is also an escape to an (imagined) place in time. Frey explains that on the Camino there is often “a ‘sentimental longing for feelings of the past’ —a sense of nostalgia—particularly for the medieval past.” In the 1980s

and 1990s, she explains (and I would add the 2000s as well), an important motive has been “to walk in the footsteps of one’s ancestors. This trend is not unique to the Camino but is part of a post-industrial, materialist society in which the past feels more authentic than the modern present” (Frey 41). Edwin Mullins witnessed a similar phenomenon in the early 1970s, when he remarked, “The Middle Ages had a passion for religious relics; we have a passion for historical relics” (1). Church ruins, Romanesque architecture and centuries-old paintings have a certain power that century-old bones had for medieval ancestors, says Mullins, who adds, “In the medieval era this faith in relics was the product of a universal lack of faith in contemporary life, and of a consequent expectancy of destruction to come. This lack of confidence in today, with its accompanying vision of Hell tomorrow, led to the search for an ideal only to be found in the imagined perfection of the past” (1). The British writer later muses, “The Romantics turned to the Middle Ages to indulge their dreams. Do we still?” (Mullins 16).

The notion that modern pilgrims indulge their dreams in the remote past is not necessarily a stretch. Most of the modern pilgrim accounts I have read repeatedly convey the author’s desire for a connection on the Camino with an “authentic” past, to varying degrees, as an essential element of their pilgrimage experiences. In part to avoid the “tourist trap” and commercialization in Santiago, and in large part to follow a medieval tradition, many pilgrims decide to continue walking beyond the apostolic city, until they reach the rocky Coast of Death, and then to Finisterre. Their European ancestors, especially non-Spaniards, did the same, sometimes ending instead at the coast of Muxía, where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared to St. James to encourage him in his mission of evangelization. The route from Santiago to Finisterre is not part of the official route as declared by the Church, and has seen both fewer pilgrims and less

reformation than the “official” pilgrim roads. Largely for that reason, many pilgrims claim that it feels more real and more natural to them.

Hitt did not continue to the coast, but he did express disappointment at the fact that he could not, thanks to the giant obstacle of the Atlantic Ocean, merely open his door and begin walking west towards Santiago, as medieval pilgrims did. Instead of buying a flight to the French-Spanish border, where many modern pilgrims start their Camino, Hitt researched his family history to see if any of his ancestors had significant interactions somewhere in France, so that he could begin his journey there (26). It felt “wrong”, says the former Episcopalian who was born and raised in South Carolina, to start in a random French town with no significance to his life or to his roots. While the self-described agnostic had renounced the Christian faith in which he was raised and therefore had no desire to engage in the religious pursuits of his ancestors, he was undoubtedly searching for a connection with his ancestors and with the past.

Edward Stanton, an American professor of Spanish who set out for the Road in the midst of a mid-life crisis — “My life was in shambles, I felt exhausted by work, my marriage was foundering” — is one such authenticity seeker (1). Javier Navarro, a good-humored priest and hospitalero in Roncesvalles, told Stanton that he personally was in charge of marking a thirty kilometer stretch of the Camino with yellow arrows for the ease of modern pilgrims. When Stanton questioned how the priest knew where to mark, Navarro explained that, “Either I attempted to mark the traditional route or one that captures the medieval experience: narrow paths off the highways, through towns or woods that might have been one of the historical pilgrims’ roads.” (14). Stanton incredulously asks, “Might have been?”, perturbed by the fact that his path *may* not have been consecrated by medieval walking sticks (15). Pilgrims looking

for the “real deal” complain of modern intrusions on the route, such as one stretch of the road with an excessive amount of yellow arrow markers encountered by Stanton. Already irritated to possibly be missing “the authentic Camino I’ve dreamed of”, he denounced whoever might be responsible for the plague of arrows as “a fanatic who has terrorized the countryside with his weapons of paintbrush and scissors” (34).

Clearly, authenticity on the Camino is not something to be taken lightly. This is very important in a discussion of Galicia, as many pilgrims indicate that the ox-pulled carts, the women dressed in black, the villages that appear to have remained unchanged for centuries and the sing-song Galician language, among other things, feel *authentic*. This is, I believe, one of the factors in the change of perceptions of Galicia.

The desire for the primitive and Spain

While an appreciation for traditional ways of life, or for whatever is perceived to be “traditional” and “authentic” is common to virtually all industrialized societies today in the face of the homogenizing forces of globalization, I believe that we must also examine this phenomenon in the context of Spain specifically. Many of the authors cited above come from the United States, the United Kingdom or Germany, none of which have had the “inferiority complex” that still lingered in Spain not so long ago. After all, an important part of Spanish history has been the conflict between those who strove to modernize and Europeanize the nation, fighting to disprove the famous “Africa begins at the Pyrenees” statement,⁴⁷ and those who wished to maintain the status quo. After its entrance into the European Union and its opening up

⁴⁷ The statement has been attributed to Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870).

to the rest of Europe and the world in the second half of the 20th century, Spain has been able to shed its inferiority complex. In *Spain and Portugal in the European Union: The First Fifteen Years* (2003), Juan Díez Nicolás includes studies that suggest that Spaniards perceive a “higher international respect” for their country than they did during the Franco regime, and that the majority considers the changes that have taken place in the decades since the death of Franco as positive advances (143). The struggle now is not how to incorporate itself into Europe, but rather how not to be swallowed by it. Díez Nicolás maintains that Spaniards have acquired “a very pro-European orientation, probably the most European of all Europeans” (121), but adds,

In a sense, one could argue that Spaniards’ aim to be European results more from their will to avoid being left out of Europe, as a question of pride, than because they really wanted to integrate and dissolve themselves into a European identity. It is likely that Spaniards want to be Europeans without renouncing their Spanish and regional identities, something that is coherent with their limited geographical mobility, not only toward Europe, but even towards different regions and localities within Spain (130).

Preserving regional identities sometimes means preserving the same practices or beliefs previously viewed as obstacles to progress. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Galicia was perceived by some as an impediment to the nation’s modernization as far back as the Enlightenment. Its superstitions and its popular religiosity, a mix of Christian and pagan beliefs and customs, were an embarrassment to those who hoped for Spain’s modernization. Today, however, Spain no longer needs to prove itself as part of Europe. Galicia’s “primitivity” (or perceived primitivity) is no longer a threat, but rather, an asset to Spain. In the words of Dorothy Noyes, “the fear of the primitive [is] overcome by the desire for it” (191). Perhaps this is part of why contemporary Spanish pilgrims’ accounts are not much different in their descriptions of Galicia from those of

the German, American, British, and other foreign pilgrims described above. Spaniards fall in love with the same traits that foreigners do. We saw this briefly in quotes from Gaspar Gómez de la Serna's and José Antonio Vizcaíno's 1965 accounts, and this admiration for the picturesque region would be shared by nearly all Spanish pilgrims for the following four decades. Julio Pelayo Cortázar, a Santander native who walked the Way in the late 1990s, was in awe of the “belleza espectacular” of “la Galicia mágica” and its bucolic scenery. As soon as he left the province of Lugo and entered A Coruña, however, he noticed a difference in the landscape: “el Camino parecía más civilizado, no sin pena por parte del caminante” (184, he refers to himself as “el caminante”). This quotation is telling. Decades before, the *lack* of civilization was lamentable, now the very presence of civilization is perceived as a loss. Another Spanish pilgrim makes a similar distinction between “la Galicia profunda” of Ourense and the provinces of Pontevedra and A Coruña;

Atrás queda la Galicia profunda; la de las gargantas y quebradas por donde circulan el Miño y el Sil; la de la guadaña y el heno en carreta; la intacta e históricamente dormida, y comienza una Galicia ondulada, suave, troceada y minifundista, que despierta a la industria y la modernidad (Ávila 243).

Constantino Ávila and his son Daniel walked the Camino in July of 1997, mostly to enjoy nature and their hobby of hiking. The pair decided to avoid all of the official pilgrim routes — the elder pilgrim has already done the official route several times — and instead walk towards Santiago in a straight line from their home in Ayora, Valencia. They were enamored with Galicia's natural beauty and its traditional way of life. The Valencian praised the locals' ability to conserve “un alto grado de pureza en costumbres y tradiciones” (Ávila 218).

“Galicia é única”

One of the slogans adopted by the regional government’s board of tourism in the last few years is “Galicia is unique”. The Xunta de Galicia (the regional government) has gotten it right, if we are to believe pilgrim accounts. Bert Slader, a teacher from Northern Ireland who walked the Camino in 1985, remarks, “Travelling across the landscape from the Pyrenees I had seen the different faces of Northern Spain, but here in Galicia I might have entered another country” (141). This type of comment repeats itself in many pilgrim narratives. Mullins correctly observes that “Northwest Spain is not the Spain of castanets and Ambre Solaire” (185). “Unique” and “different” can of course mean any number of things. Many, if not most, refer to the previous point, the idea of Galicia as an escape to a pre-industrialized, “primitive” society. Teresa Simal is a native of Daimiel, Castilla-la Mancha, who set out for the Road after the death of her parents, for whom she had cared during their long illnesses. In her 2004 account, Simal writes, “Entrar en la Galicia del interior es encontrar un mundo muy distinto al del tramo recorrido hasta entonces. En este pueblo no había ni bar, ni tienda y conté más vacas que personas” (158). The small towns of the interior are what she perceives as “la Galicia eterna, un rosario de vaquerías y aldeas”; and Simal notes that, “el paisaje era totalmente distinto. Crúzabamos la Galicia más típica y repetida, aquella en la que apenas se nota la alteración del tiempo” (167). Again we see the idea of a land frozen in time.

Another idea of “different” is better. Several pilgrims confess that Galicia is their favorite place visited on the Camino. Alfonso Biescas Vignau, a pilgrim from Vizcaya, walked the Way in the spring of 1999. Like Teresa Simal, he started his journey after the death of his parents,

who both suffered long, painful illnesses, and he hoped that the pilgrimage would help him to deal with his grief. On his way from Triacastela to Barbadelo, the Basque pilgrim notes:

el Camino se pierde por un bosque de una belleza extraordinaria. El sendero discurre junto a arroyos, campos y arbolados [...] Me gustó muchísimo la parte de Navarra y Rioja hasta Burgos. Valoré la belleza de Castilla. El Bierzo me enamoró, pero esta etapa es la más atractiva por su desbordante naturaleza, por los recodos por los que transita, por la paz que respira. Una maravilla la mires por donde la mires. La mejor sin duda. (151-152)

In contrast with the dry, flat *meseta* he had walked through days before, Biescas Vignau calls O Cebreiro “un paseo, puro goce de los sentidos” and praises the “ambiente maravilloso” throughout the Galician part of the Way (148, 149). Similarly, on several occasions Sanz Jarque speaks of “esta sin igual, hermosa y querida tierra de Galicia” as unlike anything he has seen before (381).

Another Spanish pilgrim claimed Galicia as his favorite part of the Camino. Segundo Borlán was a middle-aged man from a small town near Sahagún, León, who had wanted to do the Camino since childhood. He never found the chance until his young daughter was discovered to have a serious illness from which she was finally able to recover. Largely to give thanks to those who helped his daughter and their family, he decided to set out for Compostela on a rented donkey, since a broken ankle prohibited him from walking. Borlán described the Camino outside of Triacastela as “hermoso” and a “maravilla de naturaleza”, before running out of adjectives to capture its beauty: “no encuentro palabras para describir lo que estamos viendo” (185). He confesses that he has traveled all over Spain, and thought that he would find nothing more impressive than Navarra or La Rioja—that is, until he discovered Galicia, which he

considers the most beautiful part of his country. He adores “esos pueblos tan bonitos, esa amabilidad de sus gentes, ese paisaje tan maravilloso” (Borlán 188).

Galicia, bucolic paradise

These pilgrims who see in Galicia a remnant of the past also describe it as a kind of bucolic cosmos, in some accounts a paradise unknown to most of the world. Michener praises its chain of *rías* (long, narrow river inlets), which “create pastoral scenes of deep loveliness”, and, to the traveler’s delight, “tourists in general seem not to have discovered them” (Michener 781). Edwin Mullins echoed these sentiments in 1976, referring to Galicia as a “hitherto sealed honeypot” (187). Of Ribadeo, in the province of Lugo, Layton notices its “charm” and declares the nearby area to be “the least spoilt part of all Spain’s coast line, a series of enchanting little fishing villages nestling at the foot of verdant hills” (176). Mondoñedo is a “pretty little village” (177), Lavacolla is a “hallowed spot” and Padrón is “charming” (189). Pelayo Cortázar describes several Galician towns as “bucólico” (177, 181), and Conrad Rudolph calls the area near Finisterre, with its “astonishing beauty” (104), a “forgotten paradise” (43). Biescas Vignau and his fellow walking mates, another Basque and a German, are overwhelmed by the natural beauty around them. Biescas Vignau is so moved by the “hermosa” Galicia that he is left speechless: “Es imposible describir lo que veo, lo que siento” (152). Juan José Sanz Jarque is also “emotional” when he enters the region through stunning O Cebreiro (355). Mariano Encina Amatriain, an Argentine lawyer who was twenty-eight years old when he made the trip with his girlfriend Ana in 2001, says that the beauty of Galicia sends a chill down his spine. In Finisterre, he writes, “la plenitud de aquel lugar era sobrecogedora. La magnificencia del océano,

arreciendo contra el cabo a unos metros hacia abajo de donde estábamos nosotros, erizaba la piel” (317). The couple from Buenos Aires even decided to get married at the end of their pilgrimage in the idyllic Finisterre.

There are also several references to Galicia as a biblical paradise. Encina Amatriain titles his chapter on Galicia “El jardín del Edén”. On the way to O Cebreiro, he says, “estábamos atravesando el más maravilloso de los paisajes, un lugar si la Biblia volviera a escribirse sería la referencia más próxima y cercana al jardín del edén” (233).

Magical Galicia

Others claim to find a palpable air of magic in the cool Galician mist, such as Dutch pilgrim Cees Nooteboom, who in 1992 wrote, “The Galician countryside is the setting of fairy tales and fables, witches and wizards, of sudden apparitions and enchanted forests, roaming spirits and Celtic mists, even if you walk in the gathering gloom of nightfall for just an hour or two you will be caught in an illusion, the path is not a path, the bushes are horses, the voice I hear comes from another world” (330-31). The landscape is enchanting, so much that Nooteboom asks himself, “What kind of world am I in that makes my own world so dingy and shadowy by comparison?” (331). The spell is also cast on Hoinacki as he enters O Cebreiro, where the view is “magically evocative of a fairy wonderland” (Hoinacki 218). German comedian Hape Kerkeling calls O Cebreiro “glorious”, its views “magical” and the endless panorama of green “staggeringly beautiful” (290). There is something other-worldly about Galicia for Robert Ward, who calls it “a land of mist, magic and blarney, a ‘thin place’ where little divides this world from the next” (270). Frey seems to agree, calling it “the hinterland, the

mystical, green place behind the mountains” (142). Pelayo Cortázar describes the “aspecto fantasmal” created by the fog along parts of the Way (179), Basque pilgrim Biescas Vignau calls Galicia “tierra de brumas” (148), and Villán talks about the importance of the “Magia de los bosques, [y la] cultura del árbol al que se rinde veneración y culto” (Villán 158). Many mention the region’s trees and forests, and others speak of the importance of the dead, such as Sanz Jarque, who claims that part of Galicia’s nature is the existence of the dead among the living (448). There are several mentions of legends as well. For Constantino Ávila, the beauty of Ribeira Sacra is indescribable, and “Todo este paisaje está más cerca de la leyenda que a la realidad, como esos ‘pájaros azules’ que viven dentro de las aguas del Río Sil o esa huella de herradura del caballo de Santiago, que se apoyó sobre la roca para atravesar el río de un salto” (227).

Others claim that walking through Galicia is like being in a dream. Encina Amatriain repeatedly refers to the land as “la mágica tierra de ensueño” (306). Bert Slader calls the paths there the “lanes of enchantment”, which is also the title he gives to the chapter in which he writes about the region with a “Celtic feel” (140). On the way to Melide, he recalls, “I opened my eyes and saw a dream landscape” (159). The dream-like, magical feeling is often connected with spirituality. Encina Amatriain recalls the green mountains, fantasy landscape, and “conjunction of astros and spirits surrounding it all” and writes that he felt that he had touched Heaven with his hands (328). Tarragona native Sanz Jarque relates that the impressive scenery near Sarria “led me naturally to prayer and contemplation of the greatness of nature’s Creator. I felt happy” (376).

Galicia celta

Nearly every contemporary account, as well as several older accounts, speak of Galicia as a Celtic land. The Northern Irish pilgrim Bert Slader claims that the green countryside and rolling hills remind him very much of his homeland. O Cebreiro seems strangely familiar, “as if I had been here in a previous life” maybe due, he says, to the “Celtic feel of the village and its people” (140). American professor Edward Stanton ponders why the “green, misty valleys” and the scenery in general have such a profound effect on him, and asks himself, “Could I have some obscure, ancestral memory of this place, this Spanish Ireland, the most Celtic region in Spain?” (172, 175). Comparisons between the Green Isle and Galicia, “the Spanish Ireland”, are countless, perhaps as numerous as references to a Celtic past. French pilgrims José and Michèle Laplane compare the region to Bretagne, also known as a “Celtic land” (180).

The castros and pallozas mentioned earlier have been found to date to the pre-Roman era, and may be Celtic, but pilgrims’ comments about Celtic culture are not limited to these constructions. Cees Nooteboom writes that Galicia, “like Ireland, is so receptive to all things magic and mysterious” and mentions the “Celtic mists” that contribute to its fairy-tale like atmosphere (241, 330). For Encina Amatriain, the fog in O Cebreiro is “proof of spells” and in the “magical and mysterious town, one breathes the traditions of the Celts” (237). Galicia is “An enchanted land, where her inhabitants believe in spirits hidden in the mountains” (236). Conrad Rudolph is enamored with the “old Celtic region”, bagpipes and all (104). While walking along a “very romantic” stretch of the Camino of country roads and oak forests near Triacastela, Hape Kerkeling remarks, “Bagpipe music would suit this landscape, and sure enough, Galicia’s national instrument is a kind of sheep’s-udder shawm that produces squawking sounds!” (303).

The German maintains that bagpipe music is the ideal soundtrack for life in the “glorious” Galician countryside, since “everything here is originally Celtic” (290). The idea of a green, rainy Galicia of Celtic ancestors is one of the most prevalent portrayals of the region in modern pilgrim accounts, and as such deserves further discussion in Chapter 5.

Los gallegos y el gallego

Those who have written about their experiences on the Way in the past several decades are clearly delighted with the beauty of “Magical Galicia”, but an even more surprising difference when compared to most older accounts is modern pilgrims’ comments about the region’s people. *Gallegos*, the subjects of many a pilgrim account and the objects of many a joke throughout the centuries, are almost always portrayed in a positive light in modern pilgrimage narratives. In the dozens of accounts I have read of pilgrimages from the 1960s up until 2009, not one is as negative about Galicians as Ford, Borrow, Albani, or King. James Michener, who has a self-proclaimed “love affair” with Spain and knows it well from four decades of traveling through the country, counts Galicians among his favorite Spaniards. He speaks fondly of “those granite-hard Galicians whom I like so much” and considers his afternoon with the educated, “handsome” Condesa de Peña Ramiro (a Galician) “one of the most gracious experiences I was to know in Spain” (Michener 752). Alfonso Biescas Vignau notes that those who run the hostals in Galicia are “kind and warm” (149), and Constantino Ávila praises the “carácter hospitalario del pueblo gallego” (227). The Valencian author and his son are taken in by the priest in Doade, as well as by a couple in another village who are friends of friends, and both father and son are overwhelmed with the generous hospitality and local feasts to which they are treated. Pelayo

Cortázar reports, “[Yo] había podido apreciar que el contacto con la población gallega era muy fácil y agradable- siempre se puede contar con ellos para echar una parrafada- pero si se trata de sus mujeres, su espontánea conversación constituye una gratísima sorpresa” (185).

Another interesting, and I believe significant, change in the portrayals of the inhabitants of the region is what is written about their language, *galego*. Despite Galician cultural revivalist movements in the 19th century, even several of the region’s own writers and intellectuals considered Galician to be a dialect spoken only by uneducated country people. Albert Jouvin, a Frenchman who traveled Spain in the 17th century, called the language “grosera” (qtd. in Díez Borque 149), George Borrow complained of its “uncouth” enunciation and “half singing, half-whining accent” (259), and King considered it “dull and rough” (v2, 472). Belgian pilgrim León Degrelle complained that it was impossible to understand the locals, mostly shepherds and harvesters who spoke nothing but their “‘gallego’ natal, el galaico, una especie de portugués modernizado, pero entreverado con toda clase de giros castellanos deformados, que pareciera que no se puede expulsar más que masticando silex con fuerza” (124).

Today, however, the poetic Romance language is admired by 20th-21st century writers like Robert Ward and Edward Stanton for its sing-song rhythm and soft sound (258, 174). The Cuban-born Alfonso García Osuna, who is a child of Canarian parents and was raised in Spain, calls the language “melodious” (169), and Espido Freire (biased as she may be as a daughter of Galician emigrants, of course) agrees that it is “musical” (208). German Hape Kerkeling enjoys the “earthy” sound of *galego*, which also reminds him of Italian (292). In *The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago: The Complete Cultural Handbook* (2000), scholars and repeat pilgrims Linda Kay Davidson and David Gitlitz note that as one heads toward Cebreiro, “the rhythms of speech

become more musical with each meter you climb” (xiv). They also explain the distinguished literary past of Galician, “the elegant court language” of medieval troubadours, and do not mention that the language and its speakers have for centuries been seen as uncouth (311). I found this commentary interesting since Gitlitz and Davidson’s handbook is just what its title suggests: a very complete account explaining the detailed history of towns, monuments, and even specific birds and plants found along each section of the Way. The scholars, perhaps consciously, choose to omit the negative associations of the past and thus contribute to a more positive image of Galicia for their reading public.

In addition to comments on the Galician language, some pilgrims—mostly Spaniards—note Galicians’ accents when speaking Spanish. Previously, some of the derogatory comments we saw in Chapter 3 about the region’s inhabitants also applied to the way in which they spoke this language, which was generally not their native tongue. Their accents, difficulty with Spanish or mix of Spanish and *Galego* were provided more motives to ridicule them. Today, on the other hand, the Spanish pilgrims whose accounts I have read find the Galician accent quite agreeable. Biescas Vignau calls it “muy dulce” (169).

Galician cuisine

There are also plenty of commentaries about food in Galicia. In the dozens, surely over one hundred pilgrimage-related books (personal accounts, practical guides, cultural guides) I have consulted to see what has been written about the region, even those who make minimal references to the community tend to mention at least two things: the beauty of O Cebreiro and/or the landscape in general, and the quality of the “outstanding” food and drink (García Osuna 160). Pilgrims delight in refueling and warming up in O Cebreiro with a hot bowl of *caldo gallego* (a

type of soup), or cooling off with a bottle of the region's own beer, *Estrella Galicia*, or a glass of *Ribeiro* or *Albariño*, two of the region's finest and most popular wines. Other favorites, praised repeatedly in numerous pilgrim accounts, are the region's cheeses, *empanada* (pasties), *pulpo* (octopus), and its many other varieties of fresh seafood. At first glance, these observations may not seem very important; after all, most parts of the world have something good to eat or drink, and nearly all travel accounts mention local food. Yet for Galicia, the land where pilgrims like Nicola Albani complained that rye bread was sold as if it were a holy relic, and wine, dairy and vegetables were practically non-existent, pilgrims' comments on Galician food are significant. The fact that a region where not too long ago, hunger was a part of life for a large part of the population is now known as a community where one can eat very well speaks volumes about its progress.

Old stereotypes die hard: The case of *Road of Stars to Santiago*

Although the vast majority of modern authors who trek to Santiago are delighted with the lush green land they compare to Ireland, there is a small minority that prove that old stereotypes of the region are neither entirely gone nor forgotten. American novelist Kathryn Harrison, a middle-aged woman who completed the pilgrimage in bits and pieces on three different occasions but who otherwise has little knowledge of the Spanish language or culture, comments that for Galician women, the process of aging "has stripped away whatever modernity they might have once possessed, that the present with its cars and computers has peeled off these women like a second skin, to reveal crones the same as those pictured in books of fairy tales" (110). Besides this strange and less than favorable remark, Harrison is delighted with the "quaint" and

“jarringly lovely” land that evokes wonderful childhood memories. Her description of these women reminds me of Ford’s comparison of Galician women to mummies, and is somewhat reminiscent of Georgianna Goddard King’s account of the poor, shabbily dressed *gallegas*. While I do not know if Harrison read or was influenced by the Art History professor’s *The Way of Saint James*, another American pilgrim/writer certainly did read it and seems to have been influenced by it. Edward Stanton confesses that King’s three volume account of the Camino, its peoples and its art is his favorite piece of Jacobean literature.⁴⁸ The professor of Spanish references the work of King, who as we will recall was quite unenthusiastic about the inhabitants of Galicia, several times throughout his book and he even seems to share some of her opinions.

Stanton’s *Road of Stars to Santiago* (1994) abounds with visions of primitive peoples whose way of life has not changed much since the height of feudal society (although this is seen as a negative feature, in contrast to the enthusiasm expressed in accounts I have discussed previously). In one village in the Ulla valley, “The old woman who serves us, dressed in black of course, speaks of meigas [witches] and local superstitions” (178). Other rural Galicians are likewise eager to share their superstitions with Stanton and his travel companions, Claudio, whom he describes as “half-Christ, half-Merlin” and Berna, “our Joan of Arc”. Between the three of them, the American author is certain that “we’re well protected from the innumerable ghosts, witches, and goblins of Galician folklore” (164). It seems that this protection may be necessary in Galicia, “land of local spirits of the earth, fire, water” since they repeatedly encounter mysterious, silent villagers clad head-to-toe in black, such as a shepherdess who is “one of those ageless Galician women dressed in black who might be anywhere from thirty to

⁴⁸ He even prefers it over the well-known *The Road to Santiago: Pilgrims of St. James* (1957) by Walter Starkie, who was also coincidentally Stanton’s professor.

sixty years old" (165, 169). Although the only contact he expressly states to have with "peasants" in the Ulla valley is in the form of a passing salutation, Stanton declares that these mostly female peasants speak only Galician (180). One wonders how he could possibly judge their knowledge of Spanish, or of any other languages, only from such a quick greeting.

Later, the Californian emphasizes the lack of sophistication of a toothless villager who excitedly recounts her experiences of migrating to Havana, where she acquired two English phrases, "All right!" and "Yes!", which she pronounced so poorly that they are nearly incomprehensible (176). Since Stanton's travel companions are too disgusted at the proposition, the author accepts the woman's nearly insistent plea to drink milk just squeezed from a cow's teats, even garnished by real cow hair floating in the cup (he asked for authentic, and he got it). Some Galician villages are "shabby", most are wet, muddy and smell like manure, and Lavacolla is "horrible", with its noisy traffic, soccer stadium and airport. The author and his fellow pilgrims also report seeing prostitutes there (184). Stanton and his friend Claudio, an astrologer from Valencia, speak often of the strong belief throughout the region in various superstitions; for example, "Some Galicians still believe in keeping the lar burning constantly; they light the morning fire with the coals of the previous night. To let the fire go out is supposed to bring bad luck on the house and family. The gallegos consider the lar and flame to be alive" (161). Regarding *almas en pena* and *La Santa Compañía*⁴⁹ Claudio assures his fellow travelers that, "I've never met a single gallego who didn't believe in them at heart" (164). One must wonder exactly how many *gallegos* Claudio has actually met. A survey published in 2010 revealed that

⁴⁹ The first term refers to souls left roaming on the earth with some unfinished business, and the second to processions of souls from purgatory who walk on the fog and come in search of a person whose death is near. Both are important parts of Galician folklore.

Galicians, along with Basques and Navarrese, are the Spaniards who least believe in “false myths and urban legends”; Madrid, and even Claudio’s own Valencia, proved to be more superstitious than the land of the restless souls (“Os galegos son dos que menos cren”). Two years earlier, Murado also reported that surveys conducted in Galicia about belief in superstitions show “levels of skepticism that would put even Voltaire to shame” (193-194). Broad generalizations and stereotypes abound in Stanton’s account, such as that Galician men rarely initiate a conversation, but that women are lively and talkative (165), and that *gallegos* refuse to give straight answers (181). Perhaps the most surprising statement of all is the remark that since so many men are forced to be away at sea or to emigrate to find work, Galician women are known for having “light morals” (165).

Despite several positive evaluations of the region, mostly commenting on its warm-hearted people or praising the beauty of the landscape, which “affects [him] more than any other”, Stanton’s account clearly contributes to, rather than dispels, negative stereotypes of Galicians and their land. He describes several of the towns as some of the poorest he has seen on the route, adding, “my heart contracts in these muddy hamlets: men and women living cheek by jowl with their animals, old, tired, sullen people with low foreheads and toothless mouths. The eternal Galicia of damp and dirt, *the Spain of the Third World*” (167, italics mine). Stanton also insists on another occasion that the region is “about as close to the Third World as you can get in Western Europe” (155). Later, after coming across a huge ox yoked to a wagon, he quotes his female travel companion’s remark, “So far Galicia reminds me of the Middle East or India, where the animals are so long-suffering” (166). The ox’s owner appears, and they glance in his doorway to find a rustic earthen floor, a chimney and hearth with slabs of jerked beef hung above

it. Claudio guesses from the smell that they must be burning jara or rock-rose, and assures Stanton that, “They burn anything in Galicia” (166). Such comments about the Third World leave the reader wondering if Stanton is describing Galicia in 1992 or in 1892.

Intrigued by the author’s comments in *Road of Stars*, I decided to see what else he had to say about Galicia in his *Handbook of Popular Spanish Culture* (1999). For one, when discussing Article 3 of the 1978 Constitution, Stanton says that Catalan “constitutes a separate Romance language every bit as much as Castilian, French or Italian. Some argue the same for Galician” (13). An important fact that the professor neglects to mention is that “some” refers not to a group of Galician separatists or a handful of villagers, but rather to the European Union and a worldwide community of linguists who do indeed recognize Galician as a separate Romance language.⁵⁰ Also noteworthy in light of his statements about Galician women with “light morals” and the superstitious nature of the entire region is the fact that Stanton assures his readers in the introduction to his *Handbook*, “I will keep a weather eye on the alert for these [referring to bullfighting] and other clichés, always trying to separate the facts from the myths”(xiii).

Stanton’s account is by no means typical of what I have found, and I believe that it is based largely on old stereotypes and older accounts from when the region was less advanced (accounts such as King’s, for example). Besides the fact that he is a professor of Spanish literature and culture, it is also clear from his book that Stanton acquired knowledge of the

⁵⁰ To be fair, it seems that Stanton has developed some immunity to the *fiebre autonómica* in general, not only when it applies to Galicia. Insisting that “we must speak of culture beyond the regional level”, he states, “I avoid the latest fashion of flaunting place names in Basque, Catalan and Galician spellings that would be unfamiliar and confusing to most English speakers.” (*Handbook*, xiv). Hardly a “fashion”, the use of certain place names in Galician has actually been declared law by the Xunta. Stanton also, on more than one occasion, stresses the importance of the Spanish language, since it is spoken in the Americas and all over the world, subtly (or not) downplaying the importance of the regional languages.

region's folklore and at least a rough idea of its history, much more than authors with little knowledge of the Spanish language and history like Harrison, which is further proof that he may rely heavily on old stereotypes. His account also resembles in some ways that of his former professor Walter Starkie's *The Road to Santiago: Pilgrims of St. James* (1957). Starkie, an Irishman who traveled extensively throughout Spain, was also very interested in folklore and superstitions, but Stanton seems to ignore the fact that decades have passed since Starkie visited Galicia.

In addition to *Road of Stars*, I did find one other recent pilgrim narrative that contrasts with most pilgrims' representations of Galicia, this one written by a Spaniard. Juan Luis García Hourcade published *En camino, a los cuarenta: guía para peregrinos del Camino de Santiago*, an account of his trip with three male friends, in 1993. The author and his friends Jaime, Juan and Elías are all around age forty at the time of the trip and are Spanish, although the author never specifies from what part of the country. The foursome starts out in Roncesvalles and does the pilgrimage on foot. The author loves Galicia's wine, Estrella Galicia beer, orujo (a type of liquor) and octopus, and on several occasions confesses that he is impressed by the landscape: "De Mercado a Portomarín el peregrino hace un viaje irrepetible, algo inolvidable y conmovedor" (168). However, these unforgettable memories include meetings with "meigas" and inbred villagers. Upon entering the region, he gives the following description:

Para empezar, el Lugo profunda espera, con meigas y lobishomes (¡palabra de honor!); vino espesazo que se pega a la taza después de haber bebido; boñigas y ganado vacuno productor de tales; caminos pedregosos o embarrados aun en año de pertinaz sequía; castaños increíbles y viejos oscuros, de muchas sayas ellas, de mucha pana renegrida ellos, de mucha endogamia todos. (173)

Even Borrow, Ford and Degrelle, with all their negativity, did not suggest inbreeding. To be fair, however, the Spanish pilgrim does make what I consider to be disrespectful remarks about the people of other regions along the Camino, and pokes fun especially at rural inhabitants, or “pueblerinos”, as he calls them, most of them elderly. Later García Hourcade simplifies rural Galicia for the readers of his “guide” by explaining that there are hardly any urban centers, but rather “eight houses, twenty cows, six poorly counted villagers, a thousand cowpatties, and an old church” in a typical town (163-164). In the small town of Mercado, one of these handfuls of villagers is a woman working at the local bar, whom he baptizes “a Meiga do Mercado”. The local “witch” is a “solitaria, extraña, y al cabo hospitalaria meiga perdida en un caserío diminuto en el corazón de la provincia de Lugo” (168). The guide book he carries assures him that the locals are interesting and easy to get along with, but García Hourcade insists that this is only “según les pille” (ibid.). The villagers are of few words and are hardly helpful in directing pilgrims, he says. In San Paio, a “pueblecito agazapado como puede, el pobre, en un rincón” the four friends stop a boy to ask him where they can find water. The author relates the difficulties the five have in what would seem like a rather simple exchange, especially considering that they are all Spaniards, due to the fact that the boy speaks “en un gallego que no entiende ni el peregrino más políglota” (179). Finally, despite the apparent linguistic barriers, the pilgrims locate the fountain the boy has suggested, which is nothing but a “charco asqueroso” (180). The Spanish pilgrim finds the Camino guidebooks to be overly optimistic on other occasions as well. One such book describes a “humilde aseo” offered by the Galician government, but García Hourcade qualifies the same hostel as “un muladar cochambroso” (164).

García Hourcade's and Stanton's accounts share some similarities, but the tone of the Spaniard's narrative is different from that of the American's. While the latter tries to capture what he sees as the "true Galician spirit" of the traditional, superstitious land — the extent to which he does so correctly is another matter — the approach of the former is more irreverent. Stanton talks repeatedly about La Santa Compañía and other folklore, while García Hourcade makes it clear that he will not do the same: "Sobre la Galicia mágica y mística, primitiva y feudal, te ahorramos el discurso, desocupado lector. Nada añadiremos sobre la morriña y la gaita, el fervor y la rudeza. Valle Inclán, Cunqueiro, por ejemplo, lo hacen bastante mejor. Ve con ellos" (164). Instead, the Spaniard prefers to narrate his journey with sarcasm and frequently talks about wine, beer and women. Other pilgrim authors inform their reading audience about the months or even years they spent reading about the Camino and its history before undertaking the long walk to Santiago, but García Hourcade talks about the pre-pilgrimage conversations he and his friends, "agnósticos y un punto anti-clerical", have had about possible flings with women along the Way (he later says that the walk is too tiring, and the hostels too public, for this to happen). At one point, the middle-aged men even dare each other to approach an attractive teenaged girl who is having dinner with her family. One of the friends accepts the dare, proclaims the girl's beauty to her father and to the whole table, and rushes back to his own table with his friends, who are all by this point doing their absolute best to contain their laughter. Also noticeable is the brevity of the description of Santiago in this pilgrim's account. Most detail their experiences in the city, the cathedral and its surroundings, and their emotions after having completed the arduous task of walking for a straight month. García Hourcade talks very briefly about the culmination of his pilgrimage.

This is just an example of the different styles of writing that one encounters in the numerous pilgrim accounts published in the last several decades. I believe that these disparities are important in interpreting each author's commentary on Galicia. Some pilgrims embark on a very spiritual journey, including those who have suffered the loss of a loved one or gone through a divorce or some other difficulty. These pilgrims tend to have a different vision of Galicia from those like García Hourcade or Jack Hitt, who do the pilgrimage more out of curiosity, a search for adventure or an escape from life than out of a search for healing or a connection with God. Regarding motives for pilgrimage, Hitt declares, "one could dress it up with all kinds of rationales and ritual, but stripped down, a pilgrim was a guy out for some cosmically serious fresh air" (13). He and García Hourcade weave jokes into their descriptions, while Teresa Simal and Juan José Sanz Jarque, among others, interject prayers and meditations every few pages. Several pilgrims who claim to find some spiritual connection or inspiration on the Camino, whether this is tied to organized religion or not, tend to have a more positive view of Galicia and of all the regions through which they pass. They are more prone to see inconveniences, such as crowded lodging or lack of hot showers, as part of the challenge, even sacrifice, of the journey. Those who do the pilgrimage out of curiosity, for physical exercise, etc. are sometimes- but not always- more critical of the Way's shortcomings.

To an extent, these disparities have to do with different constructions of identity in what Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson call "life narratives". Smith and Watson define a life narrative as "a historically situated practice of self-representation" in which "narrators selectively engage their lived experiences through personal storytelling" (14). Many of the accounts studied here are life narratives. Teresa Simal, for example, identifies herself as a divorced middle-aged woman in

the midst of the adoption process, as well in the midst of the grieving process for her parents, who is on a spiritual journey on the Camino. Jack Hitt identifies himself as a southerner-turned-New Yorker, who at the “Dantean age of thirty five” feels a need to leave behind his high-profile job and his cosmopolitan life and walk, partially to deal with a “midlife crisis” (14). Neither author tells the story of his or her life from childhood until the experience of the pilgrimage, but both recount selective life experiences that inevitably affect their experiences on the Camino, and both self-identify in a way that also conditions their narratives. Hitt’s narrative is different from that of Lee Hoinacki, for example, who confesses that he is looking for places as untouched by modernity as possible. Earlier I mentioned that Hoinacki insisted on using the old *lavadero* to wash his clothes instead of the refuge’s washing machines. The pilgrim remarks, “How thankful I am for having found this mark of the past, for having stood on these worn stones, for having actually moved in these traces” (254). Hoinacki’s account is full of comments such as these. He even tells a farmer in one town that the new refuges are over-equipped and too comfortable (240). His idea of pilgrimage includes austerity to the point of sacrifice, but Hitt and others sometimes complain about the lack of hot showers or the unhospitable refuge workers in Galicia, or take advantage of an occasional opportunity to take a car or bus in order to avoid a difficult stretch of the Road, something that Hoinacki or Conrad Rudolph, who present themselves as true, devoted pilgrims, refuse to do.

The writers’ styles, approaches to the pilgrimage and way of identifying themselves differ considerably among the many pilgrim narratives I have studied. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences and despite the variety in nationalities, age, level of education, professional background, religion, etc., among the writers, with very few exceptions, the numerous

contemporary pilgrim accounts studies here all paint a similar, and overwhelmingly positive, picture of Galicia.

Chapter 5: Clichés Dispelled, Clichés Re-created

With the exception of Stanton and García Hourcade, we have already seen that modern pilgrim accounts as a whole no longer depict Galicia as a miserable hinterland of Spain. The cruel exaggerations and stereotypes are being replaced with more positive images; however, are these contemporary depictions of a paradisiacal Galicia any more real than that of a savage Galicia?

Both of these Galicias are accurate to an extent because they have a basis in reality, although both are exaggerated and are therefore false representations. Certainly, the bucolic Galicia presented by contemporary pilgrims is far more pleasant than the wretched Galicia of poverty and ignorance, but the former vision is nonetheless deceptive at times, and almost always incomplete. The new image dispels the most negative stereotypes while reinforcing others. Most of the subtitles from Chapter 4, for example, are “tópicos” used to describe the region: magical Galicia of legends, bucolic Galicia of virgin landscapes, “Irish” Galicia of Celts and rain, etc., some with more bases in reality than others. Several Galicians in the world of culture, such as Manuel Rivas and Miguel Anxo Murado, react against these clichés. Murado insists that the idea of Galicia’s landscape as a *paisaje inocente*, the gorgeous green mountains and forests that appear to pilgrims to be untouched by the passing of centuries, is anything but innocent. It may be astoundingly beautiful, but it is no paradise. Behind the seemingly virgin land, the “huge, pure space” as Hoinacki calls it, is a long, complex history, one that often tells

of exploitation (218). Galicia has seen ecological destruction since the time of the Roman Empire, when the area that is now Galicia, León and Asturias was so over-mined that archeologists claim the region's environment would not be so damaged again until the 20th century (Murado 29). The beginning of the 21st century did not bode well for the region's ecology, either. In November of 2002, the oil tanker *Prestige* sank off of the Galician coast, provoking one of the worst ecological disasters in the region's history.

Another example of the not-so-innocent landscape, albeit of less gravity than the *Prestige*, is the eucalyptus tree, which many modern pilgrims note in their accounts. Bert Slader describes the paths that go through eucalyptus forests as “the most agreeable of walking” since the tall, thin trees offer shade and allow light to penetrate, and their scent is “delicate and fresh”. The Northern Irish pilgrim even claims that the eucalyptus forest “is an atmosphere fit for a fairy story” (Slader 159). Maybe so, but the real story of these forests would make for a rather grim fairytale. While these trees are very numerous in Galicia, especially in the province of A Coruña, they are not native to the region. Eucalyptus trees began to be imported from Australia and elsewhere in the 19th century in order to replenish the tree stock after deforestation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Armas Diéguez 98). They are a profitable import, as they grow quickly and can be cut down and sold for pulpwood. Although these trees constituted a small percentage of the new forests, rural Galicians vehemently opposed them and protested. The number of imports rose drastically during Franco's dictatorship, mostly to supply ENCE, a paper company. The problem, aesthetic preferences aside, is that these foreign trees sap the ground of nutrients, therefore killing the vegetation around them and severely affecting wildlife. Eucalyptus trees have drastically changed a good deal of the region's forests. For many

Galicians, timber from imported trees provides a source of income. For the majority, however, eucalyptus trees are anything but “agreeable”, and are a hated reminder of destructive outside influences on their land.

Other scholars also reject the idea of the *paisaje inocente*. Pedro Armas Diéguez is a professor at universities in Madrid and A Coruña, as well as the author of books and articles on industrial and rural development in Galicia. Armas Diéguez insists that the landscape is “more and more a ‘social product’, the result of relationships of power that take place in the territory, even though often generated hundreds or thousands of kilometers away from this land. To describe it as if these conditions did not exist is nothing more than a game of false objectivity.” He adds that natural land in the strict sense — completely untouched by humans — is practically nonexistent today in Galicia (91). Murado agrees, noting that Galicia’s landscape is one of the most intensely “humanized” in all of Europe, as there is not a square meter that has not been cultivated or burned by man. The writer and journalist explains,

Como sucede con el paisajismo pictórico inglés, en el que uno tiene que esforzarse en recordar que esas hermosas campiñas vacías lo están por el éxodo provocado por la revolución industrial, es sólo la emigración la que ha permitido esa idea engañosa de ‘país vacío’ que tan profundamente ha calado en la fantasía de los turistas (28).

Manuel Rivas similarly rejects the idea of “garden Galicia” as an Arcadia, or of Galicia as the “Spanish Switzerland”. The writer maintains, “Describir hoy el paisaje gallego tiene más que ver con la crónica de guerra que con un cuento de Walt Disney” (25). He discusses the contrast between Galicians’ deep love for their land and their destructive behavior, including forest fires and illegal, unethical fishing techniques that destroy wildlife. Rivas places the blame not only on outsiders, but on Galicians themselves, for the “silencio y la complicidad de muchos” (*ibid.*).

Galicia and the sea

Although most modern pilgrims walk the French Road, and therefore do not see Galician's coast during their pilgrimage unless they continue walking to Finisterre,⁵¹ pilgrims who have any knowledge of the region are aware of the strong link between the Atlantic and the region's identity. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of the Atlantic Ocean in Galicia's history or in the formation of its cultural identity. The sea has been many things for the region; it has been the principal source of contact with the outside world, especially for a region so isolated in the past from the rest of the Peninsula; it has carried millions of the region's residents away from their homeland, many never to return; and it has also been the livelihood of those who live near its waters. Millions of pilgrims never would have set out for Santiago de Compostela had St. James' body not arrived by sea (if we are to believe legend), and Galicia's history would have been entirely different if not for the Camino de Santiago.

We see the importance of the sea in the region's literature from the time of the medieval troubadours up through the 21st century. Thirteenth-century troubadour Xohán de Cangas was a "singer of the sea", as was Martín Códax, who in one of his most-well known *cantigas de amigo* confides his sorrow over an unattainable love in the sympathetic "Ondas do mar de Vigo" (qtd in Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 30). Countless poets, novelists, musicians, and other artists of the region have included the Atlantic as a part of their work. *Costumbrista* articles of the 19th century immortalized the women and men of the sea, and much of Alfonso Castelao's writing, as well as his visual art, represents the intimate relationship between the region's inhabitants and its waterways. Manuel Rivas, the most well-known contemporary writer in Galicia and one of the

⁵¹ There are, however, several routes on which pilgrims do walk near the region's picturesque coastal areas, including the *Camino inglés*, the *Vía de la Plata*, and the *Camino portugués*.

most well-known in Spain, sets many of his novels in the coastal city of A Coruña, including *Os libros arden mal* (2006) and his most well-known work, *O lapis do carpinteiro* (1998), not to mention poems like “Avenida Atlántica”. A Coruña’s pride and joy and most representative symbol, *La Torre de Hércules*, has guided ships into its rocky coasts since the 1st century A.D., and in 2009 the lighthouse was added to UNESCO’s World Heritage List. The sea is an integral part of Galician folklore, and there are many legends involving the rocky *Costa da Morte*, one of the most emblematic parts of the region. Many popular shrines, including San Andrés de Teixido, are located near the region’s shores. Several films about Galicia have also highlighted the importance of the Atlantic in its people’s lives. *Los lunes al sol* (2002), directed by Fernando León de Aranoa, is set in Vigo and reveals the difficulties that many of the region’s workers faced when the shipbuilding industry, an important source of livelihood on the Galician coast for centuries, entered in crisis.

The film that best captures the complex nature between the community and its waters, however, is in my opinion Alejandro Amenábar’s *Mar adentro* (2004). The film is based on the true story of Ramón Sampedro, a sailor from a small coastal town in the province of A Coruña who became a quadriplegic after a diving accident. Sampedro’s entire life revolved around his contact with the water, and while it led to the tragedy that would eventually prompt him to end his own life —after a decades-long battle to do so—it was also the place to which he returned in his dreams. Sampedro’s intense love for and connection to the sea, in spite of the way in which it had drastically altered his life, serves as a metaphor for the relationship between the sea and millions of Galicians throughout its history. Emigrants who were forced to cross the Atlantic out of economic necessity also dreamt of returning to the same waters, which would lead them back

to their homeland. The sea carried away many women's husbands, sons and fathers, whether fishermen, sailors or emigrants, but it also held the hope of their return. Many poems and popular ballads tell of the *gallegas'* relationship with the sea. Carlos Núñez, one of the region's most well-known and most beloved musicians today, has composed numerous songs about the role of the ocean in Galician life. One of them is "Nana de lluvia", which describes a grieving woman's intimate relationship with the sea that has claimed the lives of the men in her life. Although she is in mourning, it is the woman who consoles the sea and calms its waves, going to the shore each night to sing it a lullaby (a *nana*), in which she professes her deep sense of love and affection for the waters. The woman assures the sea, "contigo soñaré, te mimaré" and cries with her back to the shore so that it cannot see the pain that the "otro mar más sediento, otro mar más violento" has inflicted upon her (Núñez).

This complex relationship with the sea is certainly not unique to Galicia, and is common in coastal regions throughout the world. However, it is important to stress the role of the sea in the discussion of Galicia's supposed "paisaje inocente". The idea of the region's landscape as a "crónica de guerra," as Rivas suggested, is rather fitting if we consider the activities that take place on its numerous waterways, activities that are also made possible by the "silencio y complicidad" that Rivas denounces. The world witnessed the coastal region's crisis following the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige* in 2002, which sparked an international outcry, but fewer tourists and pilgrims are aware of the more hushed phenomenon of narcotrafficking. The region is unique in that it has more kilometers of coastline than all of Spain combined, as well as multiple *rías* (long, narrow inlets of the Atlantic coast), characteristics that make Galicia a natural port of entry to Europe for all types of goods. For that reason, Galicia has long been an

ideal port of entry for illegal products, which can be smuggled into the country along with legal imports, often from Latin America. While tobacco has been smuggled into Europe through the region's waterways for decades, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, clans along the Galician coast became increasingly involved in the trafficking of drugs like marijuana and heroin. Illegal drugs became a big business in areas like Vilagarcía de Arousa, where families such as the “clan de los Charlín” functioned like mafias and bought silence at all levels (police, judges, and executives in the fishing industry, to name a few). The 1980s and 1990s were the decades of the “heroin boom”, which coincided with the downfall of industry in several parts of Galicia. Ferrol’s *astilleros* or shipyards, for example, which had been producing ships for centuries and provided jobs for thousands in the area, began to close, as did other industries. The greater availability of drugs, the corruption that allowed both traffic and consumption to be relatively visible, and the economic depression caused by failing industry were a dangerous combination, resulting in startlingly high rates of drug addiction and death, especially among the young in heavy narcotrafficking areas like Vilagarcía de Arousa. The fallout of the heroin boom began to chip away at attitudes of complacency. In the 1980s, the government was forced to take action, and established the Plan Nacional sobre Drogas (PNsD) in 1985, and the Plan Autonómico sobre Drogodependencias (PAD) in 1986 (SERGAS, “Plan de Galicia sobre drogas”). Concerned citizens, including mothers of addicts, also founded groups to combat narcotrafficking and to discourage drug use.

By the late 1990s, the number of heroin deaths in Galicia had fallen, but the new drugs of choice have become cocaine and cannabis (SERGAS, “Plan de Galicia de Salud” 200). Galicia’s status as a primary port of entry to Europe for illegal drugs is convenient for Spain, the nation

that has become the largest consumer of cocaine not only in Europe, but also in the world (EFE, “El tráfico de drogas”). The supply of the drug originates in Colombia, then is shipped off the coast of Venezuela before being transferred to Galician fishing boats in the mid-Atlantic (Gemie 128). In 2003, roughly sixty percent of all cocaine seized in Europe was seized off or near the Galician coast (*ibid.*). A research group at the Universidade da Coruña estimated that the social cost of drug consumption in Galicia —in which they included the costs of rehabilitation centers, medical care for related diseases like HIV/AIDS, preventive care, research, higher crime rates, premature mortality, decreased job performance and increased rates hospitalization of users, among other costs—was anywhere between 73 million and nearly 99 million euros in 2008 alone (Rivera et al.). The financial statistics are, of course, only one measure of the impact that drug addiction has on Galician individuals, families and society at large.

Yet, while most of the continent’s cocaine enters via the region’s waterways, Galicia’s levels of drug consumption in 2008 were no higher than the average levels for Spain (EFE, “Galicia está en la media”). They have been lower than the national average in some years, and in the late 1990s, nearly 5% of the populations of Valencia and Canarias were reported to have used cocaine, as compared to 1.3% of the population in Galicia (SERGAS, “Plan de Galicia de Salud” 201). However, what has become a more serious problem than ever, say some law enforcement officials, is the region’s drug trafficking problem. In 2010, fourteen members of the Charlín clan—including several of the children and grandchildren of family patriarch Manuel Charlín, as well as a lawyer and several businessmen in the fishing and seafood industry—were sentenced to a total of one hundred and four years in prison for narcotrafficking and laundering money (Luaña). Even so, in 2010, Ricardo de Toro, the chief of GRECO (Grupo de Respuesta

Especial contra el Crimen Organizado), reported that “a pesar de los avances, la situación del tráfico de drogas en Galicia es ‘peor’ que en los años noventa” and added, “Hemos avanzado mucho en medios y legislación, pero vamos por detrás de los narcotraficantes, y en materia legislativa otros países están muy por delante de nosotros; no cabe duda que la situación es peor ahora” (EFE, “el tráfico”). De Toro added that heroin-related deaths have increased in the past two years, despite having fallen after the heroin boom of the 1990s. In May 2011, José Luis Charlín was released from prison after two decades of serving time, sparking fears that the younger brother of the Charlín clan’s patriarch will further strengthen narcotrafficking in Galicia.

This reality is further evidence that Galicia’s landscape, including its *rías* and idyllic coastline, where numerous pilgrims claim to feel a heightened sense of spirituality and communion with nature, is far from being the virginal landscape they often describe. The tiny fishing villages and the picturesque scenes of fishing boats spotting the region’s waters also hide darker realities that have serious repercussions not only in Galicia, but also throughout Europe.

The idealization of rural Galicians

Just as the region’s landscape is idealized, so are its people, particularly rural Galicians along the Camino. Near Triacastela, Hoinacki sees a man sitting in the doorway of his shop, carving shoes, and decides to talk to him. The pilgrim is happy after the brief conversation with the craftsman, who, since he “creates something good and useful for his neighbors”, unlike the mass producers of shoes sold at malls, must be “an upright member of his community” (222). On his way to Finisterre, Sanz Jarque lies down in a field to take in the beauty around him. A farmer

sees him and rushes to his aid, thinking that the pilgrim, then in his seventies, is ill. The farmer and his wife show their hospitality to the professor, who later reflects in his account on the feelings and values of these men and women who “viven y andan por el corazón de las tierras gallegas, aisladas, solitarias y alejadas del mundanal ruído, pero que son universales y que en su vivir diario están muy arriba, cerca del Padre, dotadas de la experiencia y de la sabiduría de Dios” (Sanz Jarque 461).

Other modern pilgrims express similar sentiments, particularly pilgrims from urban areas, who are in the majority. These generally middle-class or upper-middle class, educated, urban pilgrims view life in rural Galicia as in many ways superior to city life. The people there seem to lead less hectic lives, are satisfied with less, are more in tune with their own being and their environment, and are even closer to God. American Lee Hoinacki speaks of the “artificial, pseudo-experiences of sense to which one is exposed in contemporary mainstream living” as opposed to “real” experiences on the Camino (235). In rural Galicia, he refers to the world of highways, machines and “modern life” as “that other world” incompatible with the Galician countryside (241). Sala Jacint, a pilgrim from Barcelona, professes similar ideas about town vs. country:

Las tierras fértiles, con gran riqueza de agua, el ganado pastando tranquilamente por los verdes prados, el aspecto antiguo de sus casas, el cultivo de la tierra con viejos arados tirados por bueyes, el abnegado trabajo de las mujeres en la labranza del campo y en lavar la ropa todavía arrodilladas a la orilla del río, todo ello, presidido por los clásicos hórreos como si fueran eternos vigilantes me hace pensar a uno que el tiempo se ha detenido en aquellos lugares y proporciona una paz espiritual y un sosiego que no conseguirán nunca los habitantes de las grandes ciudades, llenos de nerviosismo y estrés (225)

Perhaps Jacint and other like-minded pilgrims are right in their belief that country life is less stressful, yet they offer an oversimplified view of these people and their lives. In addition to the fact that rural Galicia has higher rates of poverty and illiteracy (in older inhabitants), the predominantly rural region has a suicide rate four times higher than that of the largest Spanish metropolis, Madrid. In fact, Galicia's rate is the highest in Spain, even doubling the Spanish average in some years (AP, "Galicia es la comunidad"). Also disturbing is the fact that the number of Galicians who took their own lives in 2007 (304 residents) was double what it had been in the 1980s (Bustabad). Then, in 2009, the community experienced an increase of 18.7% in suicide rates compared with the previous year. Benito López de Abajo, the director of Imelga (Instituto de Medicina Legal de Galicia) identified the economic crisis as a factor in this increase: "En la investigación de esas muertes se verificó que varias personas habían sufrido un importante quebranto económico previo, que se añade a causas más habituales otros años" (Gómez). Others, like José Manuel Crespo, a psychiatrist in Ferrol, point to Galicia's aging population—an issue that I will address in more detail in Chapter 6—to explain the significant rise in this type of deaths. The typical profile of a Galician who takes his life is a man over the age of fifty (the likelihood of suicide increases as he ages) living in a rural area, although more young Galicians have also taken their lives in recent years (Bustabad).

In a study of suicides in the community between 1976 and 1998, researchers were alarmed to find not only that the number of this type of deaths had doubled in two decades, but also that 16% of the deaths were of adolescents and young adults, again with the majority being most of them male (Vidal Rodeiro et al. 391). The same study also revealed that the highest number of deaths occurred in spring and summer, with a peak in the month of May, and lower

numbers between October and February (395). The researchers indicated that the spring and summer months were also the period in which the most violent methods of suicide (primarily hanging) tended to be used, and suggested that the peak “podría correlacionarse tanto con factores climáticos como con las horas de luz, con los picos anuales de episodios depresivos y con los ritmos circanuales de serotonina” (*ibid.*). During the two decades studied, the highest number of suicides took place in the province of Lugo—which has a colder climate than the other three provinces—and southern Galicia had lower rates. Vidal Rodeiro’s research group speculated that a warmer climate in the south may be a reason for this difference. The distribution of cases according to size of municipality, however, is more difficult to interpret. Some of the municipalities with the highest rates of suicide in Galicia were important industrial centers, such as Arteixo and Bergondo, and urban centers throughout Galicia had more elevated rates than rural areas (with the exception of the south, again presumably due to climate). However, other municipalities with the highest rates of suicide were those with few inhabitants and aging populations—including Pedrafita do Cebreiro, where O Cebreiro, one of the most beloved towns among pilgrims, is located (395-96). It should also be noted that Vidal Rodeiro’s study investigated suicides in the community through 1998, but more recent statistics show that rural Galicia does have higher rates of suicide in the last few years than urban areas (Bustabad).

Furthermore, Vidal Rodeiro and fellow researchers point to shifting patterns in society to explain the rise in the number of suicides:

El aumento en la esperanza de vida de la población gallega es un elemento que ha de ser considerado para justificar el aumento del suicidio, ya que los ancianos son el grupo de edad con mayor incidencia. Las modificaciones experimentadas en el perfil social, cultural y demográfico de Galicia podrían explicar los cambios. Otros factores

socioeconómicos explicativos serían el incremento en la urbanización, la disolución de las redes familiares tradicionales, el consumo de drogas por los jóvenes (grupo en el que más crecen las tasas), los cambios en la percepción social del suicidio o una mayor prevalencia de enfermedades crónicas. (396)

While factors that contribute to suicide among adolescents and young adults, according to this study—depression, social isolation, mental problems, substance abuse, loss of self-esteem, anxiety about one's personal and professional future—would seem to be common risk factors for young people in Spain and elsewhere, the change in Galician society mentioned by the authors of the study stands out as a logical explanation for the region having much higher rates than the rest of Spain. This research indicates that suicide is a serious concern in Galicia, and it also highlights what is undoubtedly a more obvious truth: that the lives of rural Galicians, so frequently idealized by pilgrims, may be less fast-paced than the lives of New Yorkers or Madrilenians, but are certainly not without considerable difficulties. The idea of a rural paradise isolated from modern life and its “evils” is very attractive, and at the same time, offers an erroneous picture of the reality along the Galician leg of the Camino.

However, it is this very idea of an idyllic rural Galicia that its own nationalists promoted. The countryside was for the 19th and 20th century nationalists an essential part of Galician identity, while the city was considered “anthropological barbarism” (Gaspar 55). This *menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea* dates back to the region's *Rexurdimento*. Benito Vicetto, whose most well-known work I will discuss below, insisted that there were two separate Galicias: urban and rural. The former was inhabited by the “clowns of civilization”, who scorned the hard-working rural inhabitants of the rural Galicia. We also see the glorification of rural

society in the region's *costumbrista* articles.⁵² In the early 20th century, cultural revivalists would assume a stance similar to Vicetto's. Alfonso Castelao even defended rural Galicia in opposition to the "backward urbanization of Castilla" (qtd. in Gaspar 39). Throughout this chapter, we will see that many of the topical representations of Galicia (although positive ones) in pilgrims' accounts correspond directly to the idea of Galicia that some of its most important cultural figures promoted.

Galicia, a Celtic country

One of these topical representations of Galicia is modern pilgrims' descriptions of the region as a Garden of Eden, as well as a magical land of legends. Some of this, as the examples in Chapter 4 show, has nothing to do with a belief that Galicians actually *believe* in magic, but rather, the beauty of the landscape is so striking that it seems otherworldly, unreal, or magical. The frequent rainfall—another cliché that is exaggerated, as there are an average of one hundred and fifty days per year of rainfall, no more and no less—and intense fog encourage the otherworldly impression. Part of the vision of "magical Galicia" does, however, speak of legends and a mythical past.

Although we have seen that Stanton's account is not representative of the genre, his Spanish friend Claudio's observation is nonetheless interesting. After having traveled to Ireland three times, Claudio tells Stanton, "when I finally got here [to Galicia] I realized it was the same as Ireland except for the language" (155, 160). Pilgrims find Galicia's Celtic culture everywhere,

⁵² See, for example, in *Álbum de Galicia: A Muller tradicional*, articles such as "La costurera de aldea" by Filomena Dato Muruáis or "La mujer de Lugo" by Manuel Vázquez de Parga. There are several articles about the women of Galicia's cities, but throughout the collection there is a clear preference for the countryside.

but Manuel Rivas insists that the genesis of the remote Celtic past they refer to is actually fairly recent. Celts did inhabit the land before the Romans, but there is more to the story. At the beginning of the 19th century, the region with “no history” was in desperate need of one in order to combat the legend of a backwater country of raggedy farmers immersed in a shadowy world of superstitions. Judging from the representations we have seen of Galicians in Spanish literature and in pilgrim narratives as far back as the 15th century, the region would have to have something rather impressive to overcome such stereotypes. As we saw in Chapter 3, one of the strategies used by Galician intellectuals during the *Rexurdimento* was historical vindication. Just as tourism commercials today attempt to attract visitors with the assurance that “Galicia is unique”, 19th-century intellectuals also insisted that their land had a distinct identity. In 1838 José Verea y Aguiar wrote a *Historia de Galicia* and became the first to “systematize the Celtic race” of Galicia, exalting it as a “radically Celtic” land. In 1865, Manuel Murguía also published his *Historia de Galicia*, in which he based his region’s differentiation from the rest of Spain—“Iberian-Romanic Spain”—on a racial argument; its Celtic past, founded on popular theories of the time (Gaspar 12). In the same year, Benito Vicetto wrote a history with the same title, in which he presents his region’s history as a fantastic adventure, one in which the Celts, said to be a branch of a Biblical tribe led by Brigo, go on to create the tribe of *Gallegos* (Rivas, *El bonsai* 144). Murguía later tweaked his history, but maintained the legendary background.

As a result of these histories and the past they create, Galicia passed from being an insignificant land whose misfortunes began with the Romans and continued throughout the centuries, to having a glorious distant past of warriors and heroes (143-44). Politicians like Emilio Castelar also embraced Celtism, as did the people, and of course, the region’s artists. The

glorious past, in theory, negates Galicia's so-called black legend. This type of "creative history" was not unique to Galicia, of course; one of the features of Romanticism was the importance of the search for roots. In 1918, the *Xeración Nós*⁵³ would resuscitate these theories, which had lost importance in the second half of the 19th century. Archaeologist Florentino López Cuevillas, also a member of the *Nós* group, carried out excavations of *castros* and other pre-Roman remains in the 1920s. He published his findings in the group's journal and thus gave a scientific base to Celtic theories. The group of nationalists would also link Celtism with the legend of Atlantida, and from there comes the theory of *atlantismo*, marking a difference between Galicia, with its Atlantic coast, and the Spain of the Mediterranean. Vicente Risco stressed Galicia's connection with the Europe of the Atlantic over that with Spain, writing in his 1920 *Teoría do Nacionalismo Galego*: "For its maritime climate, rainy, with a Nordic sky and frequent fog; for its Central European flora and fauna, Galicia is certainly one of the lands of the Northern Atlantic, the most European land of the Peninsula" (17). Risco — or at least the Risco of 1920, before he became a Fascist — would have been delighted to read Dutch pilgrim Cees Nooteboom's comments on Galicia in 1992, particularly his observation that the city of A Coruña "marches on the ocean like a balcony, a city of light and wind and large windows where it feels so very different from the rest of Spain, as if she belongs more to the sea than to the vast, stony mass of mainland behind her" (332). The following description of O Cebreiro by German pilgrim Hape Kerkeling seems that it could have been penned by the *Nós* writers themselves: "Magnificent Northern European green stretches out as far as the eye can see, and the climate is becoming *distinctly Atlantic*.

⁵³ The *Xeración Nós*, also referred to as *Grupo Nós* or *Xeración do 18*, was a group of intellectuals primarily from Ourense who founded the journal *Nós*. The group was led by Vicente Risco, and others members included Ramón Otero Pedrayo, Florentino López Cuevillas and Arthur Noguerol (Gaspar 15-20).

Galicia is quite different from Castile” (290, italics mine). Alfonso Castelao also professed his admiration for the culture of Nooteboom’s and Kerkeling’s lands over that of Spain, although he viewed the industrialization of many of these countries as inferior to Galicia’s rural society (Gaspar 38-40).⁵⁴

A few decades later, Galicia’s Celtic past was not so clear, and it still is an issue of debate today. It is important to note that there is evidence to indicate that Celtic peoples inhabited Galicia as early as the 11th century B.C. The *castros* and *pallozas* I mentioned previously date from this era. However, from there the theories diverge. In the last few decades of the 20th century, the idea of Galicia as a “radically Celtic” land began to be seriously questioned, and by none other than Galician historians. By the 1980s, when postmodernist theory dominated European historiography, Celtism was ridiculed by history professors at the University of Santiago. Some said that Galicia does not seem to have been any more Celtic than the rest of the peninsula, and many accused Murguía, Verea de Aguiar and Vicetto of directly inventing Celtism, even though the three men based it on theories that had circulated Europe for more than one hundred years (Gaspar 12-13). As a result of this skepticism, purposely vague terms like “*cultura castrexa*” or “*cultura castreña*” (castro culture) appeared to refer to the region’s Iron Age, although in archaeology terms like “Celtic Iberic” or “Celtic” are still used. Despite Galicia’s numerous *castros*, many more than are found in Castilla, the word “Celtic” is still today an “academic taboo” (Murado 98). Murado clarifies the confusing situation by pointing out

⁵⁴ Unlike Otero Pedrayo and the other *Nós* writers from Ourense, Castelao accepted the idea of Europe as “una medicina desagradable pero necesaria” for Galicia’s advancement (qtd. in Gaspar 58). Other aspects of Central European culture, however, clashed with the conservative ideology of many of the members of the *Xeración Nós*. For example, Risco, a devout Catholic and a conservative, was scandalized by the sexual freedom of German culture. Differences in political ideology also pushed the *Nós* group away from identification with Central Europe in the 1930s. See Gaspar 35-40.

that, “Los ‘celtoescépticos’, como se conoce a los historiados más críticos, no discuten la celticidad de Galicia, sino la existencia de un pueblo celta en la Antigüedad” (*ibid.*). For example, some think that the word “Celtic” in classical sources could have been a generic term used to refer to the “barbarians” about whom the classical authors knew nothing; in other words, “Celtic” was a term for “the other”. To complicate things more, in recent years skeptics of the Celtic-skeptics have appeared, using historical evidence and genetic studies to demonstrate that Celtism is not completely false. These historians suggest that the northwestern part of the Peninsula was a launching pad for the “Celtification” of the British Isles, although earlier than had previously been believed. In fact, these new studies even present more evidence of Celtic life in Galicia than they do in Ireland (99).

As Murado notes, there is no consensus among scholars on this issue. The evidence of Galicia’s Celtic past, lack thereof, and every possibility in between is constantly changing. There is also a substantial difference between academic culture’s and popular culture’s belief in Celtism. In the universities, “anti-Celtism” is still dominant (100). Rivas seems to count himself among this group, and explains the *galeguistas*’ theories as:

las dos grandes *invenciones* culturales de la Galicia contemporánea: el *celtismo* y el *atlantismo*, que acaban emparentándose en un mismo trono mitológico y que impregna el imaginario colectivo, en el que los pretatarabuelos son unos simpáticos personajes que toman queimada en cuncas de barro y escuchan los chistes del druida en el claro de la luna, con la espalda apoyada en el respaldo de un dolmen, después de pasarse el día pintando espirales en los peñascos (*El bonsai* 143).

Whatever the region’s Celtic history may be, there is at least a general agreement that, as Rivas highlights here with his characteristic sarcasm, it has been extremely exaggerated. The

problem is not the exploration of, or pride in, the region's past. It is the conversion of the fictitious myth of a glorious past—of Breogán and his conquests— into history, which is what happened in Galicia. Murguía admitted his “urgent need” to create a history for his country, and Vicetto claims his right to “invenciones” (44) or “adivinación histórica” (46) as the right of a historian (Sánchez-Conejero 225). What some called “historical vindication”, or “historical guesswork” in Vicetto’s case, was propaganda and myth that became confused with history. The mythification of the Celtic past would appear in the work of many of the region’s greatest writers, like Eduardo Pondal and Manuel Curros Enríquez. Even Emilia Pardo Bazán, whose representations of Galicia could not be described as legendary or magical, does, in some of her *costumbrista* articles, refer to “la noble raza celta” or “celta-romana” of her people (Gómez Polín 40). Pondal, one of the writers who met with Murguía in the “Cova Céltica” —la tertulia about issues affecting Galicia—expresses his ideas about Galicia’s origins in his poem, “Da raza”:

Nós somos alanos,
e celtas e suevos,
mas non castellanos,
nós somos gallegos.
Seredes iberos,
seredes do demo.
Nós somos dos celtas,
nós somos gallegos.

The educated son of a wealthy *indiano*⁵⁵ father penned the poem *Os Pinos* in 1890, in which he refers to Galicia as “nation of Breogán”, a poem that became the lyrics of the Galician

⁵⁵ *Indianos* was a term that referred to Spaniards who had immigrated to the Americas. When used to refer to those who had enjoyed success abroad and later returned to their country, the term often had

anthem. The “bard of Galicia”, as he would come to be known, saw himself as a poet of freedom, a “chosen” one to awaken the consciousness of his land, to inspire his people to recover their lost dignity, and to break free from their identity as lowly serfs (Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 152). To do so, he created a Galaic-Celtic literature of heroes from a glorious past, a lost golden age, in which his ancestors were “the paradigm of courage, of heroism, of nobility” (ibid). Pondal relied not only on Murguía’s *Historia de Galicia* to re-invent this glorious past, but also on the poetry of James Macpherson, who had created the bard Ossian, supposedly a third-century poet to whom Macpherson attributed several texts from the popular Gaelic tradition. “Galicia’s bard” saw himself as the heir of these great ancient Celtic bards, and, lacking a popular Galician tradition, relied on the Ossianic cycle to create a Celtic Galicia, even using its toponymy to name legendary characters: Gundar, Rentar, Gundaruz, Brandomil, etc. (148-151).

In undertaking this type of literary/historical re-invention, Pondal did indeed have something in common with the Celtic lands with which he was so eager to be linked. In Eric Hobsbawm’s well-known book, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Hugh Trevor-Roper explains that the distinct Highland culture and tradition of Scotland, with its kilts, bagpipes and epic heroes, is a “retrospective invention” (15). The author maintains that, as Celtic Scotland had no independent tradition, a few late-18th and early-19th century writers decided to bestow it with one, and were responsible for “the usurpation of Irish culture and the re-writing of early Scottish history, culminating in the insolent claim that Scotland—Celtic Scotland—was the mother nation

negative connotations. The prosperous *indianos* tended to build large homes with a distinct American style, many of them still standing in Spain today, and were seen as flaunting their newfound wealth in the faces of those that had remained in their homeland and suffered bitterly. Many *indianos* did, however, make significant contributions to their communities, such as the García Naveira brothers of Betanzos.

and Ireland the cultural dependency" (Trevor-Roper 16). Although the author makes no mention of Galicia, he does trace the "artificial creation of the new Highland traditions as ancient, original and distinctive" to two men who very effectively transmitted the myth in the 1760s, and one of them was James Macpherson, the same source of inspiration for Pondal's poetic re-creation of Galicia's past. Trevor-Roper claims that along with the Rev. John Macpherson, James Macpherson (the two were not related) committed "bold acts of forgery" in order to create "an indigenous literature for Celtic Scotland, and, as a necessary support to it, a new history" (17). Although Galicia did not directly usurp another country's tradition, as Trevor-Roper maintains was the case in the invention of Celtic Scotland, it seems that Pondal did "borrow" from James Macpherson both the model and the literary material for a creation of a distinct Galician tradition with a glorious past. The parallels continue: in the case of Scotland, even "normally careful and critical" scholars acknowledged the theories of the two Macphersons, which then perpetuated the "chain of error in Scottish history" (Trevor-Roper 17). The same was true, as we have seen, for Galicia, both in the 19th and 20th centuries. Respected scholars perpetuated the idea of a glorious Celtic past, and even archaeologists in the *Xeración Nós* published research that gave credence to the Celtic myths, thus further cementing the theories as part of the region's history. For Celtic Scotland, Trevor-Roper maintains, it took an entire century to "clear Scottish history—if it has ever been cleared—of the distorting and interdependent fabrications of the two Macphersons" (18). In the case of Galicia, over a century has passed since the publication of the three famous Galician histories (by Vicetto, Murguía and Verea de Aguiar), and while the most romantic aspects of the region's Celtic past have been negated in serious scholarship, the truth about its Celtic history is still far from clear.

From one topical Galicia, then, came another; Mythical Galicia was a direct result of Savage Galicia. Given these fantastic “histories” of a noble Celtic land, it is no wonder that Edwin Mullins titles his chapter on Galicia “Bagpipes in the Rain”, or that most foreign pilgrims stress the Celtic character of the land. If Galicia’s cultural revivalists purposely intertwined history and legend, and its own scholars cannot agree on the region’s Celtic past, how can outsiders be faulted for buying into this topical vision of a legendary Celtic land? Furthermore, many are literally *buying* into it, as the region itself is selling this image enthusiastically. Murado confesses that he cannot help but snicker to himself when tourists refer to *queimada* as an ancient Celtic tradition. He explains that besides the fact that *aguardiente* (brandy) did not exist in prehistoric times, the practice of setting the alcoholic drink on fire while an incantation is recited, supposedly giving powers to those who drink it, is even newer than the Celtic myth. In fact, the writer and other Galician scholars maintain that the custom was created in the first half of the 20th century for tourists in Galicia’s paradors (44). The spell read with the lighting of the drink could hardly be more stereotypical: it mentions witches and broomsticks, toads, black magic, the evil eye, the forces of air, earth, sea and fire. Nevertheless, a few pilgrims gather in Santiago’s restaurants and bars to celebrate the end of their pilgrimage with *queimada*, a tradition they feel that one simply must observe in Galicia. One of these pilgrims is Edward Stanton. He and his fellow travelers enjoy the drink not in Santiago but in Arzúa, where some *gallegas* recite “one of the traditional incantations” in which they invoke “*forzas do ar, terra, mar e lume*” (182).

That said, the Celtic myth is prevalent among the Galician population as well. Murado has written several books on his region’s history, but most Galicians have not, and some of them are also unaware of the “ancient” traditions’ origins. Espido Freire also notes the desire among

pilgrims to discover ancient traditions, and confesses, “Los extranjeros buscan explicaciones exóticas a los cruceiros, al queso de tetilla, a las piedras que, puestas en pie, marcan los límites de los campos. No lo sé. Tal vez la explicación que a mí me han dado no sea menos mítica y menos falsa que la que ellos defienden” (200). In the last few decades, there has been a resurgence of the ideology of the nationalist movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and just as Manuel Murguía and his fellow nationalists used the region’s Celtic roots to emphasize a distinct Galician identity, some contemporary Galician writers and scholars—as well as souvenir shop owners and others who benefit from the tourist industry—are following the same pattern. If one wants to research Celtic Galicia, he or she will find a plethora of books published in the last decades about Celtic religion, Celtic legends, Celtic ruins in Galicia, and countless others, as well as other elements of Galician folklore—traditional legends, popular religion and Galician shrines, etc. Some of the most popular musicians and musical groups from the region, like Carlos Núñez, Milladoiro and Luar na Lubre, show strong Celtic influences in their music, which often includes bagpipes. Núñez was mentored by the Irish group The Chieftains, and is considered to be one of the most talented and most well-known bagpipe players in the world. Two thousand of the region’s bagpipers were organized in 1993 and again in 1997 to celebrate the victory of the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP, founded by Galicia’s own Manuel Fraga Iribarne) in the Galician parliamentary elections (Gemie 139).

As far as this beloved instrument, Rivas tells us, “De las historias de Galicia, una de las más hermosas es sin duda la historia de la gaita, pero lo que sí parece un equívoco es pensar que el gallego del neolítico ya andaba con la gaita al hombro. O que los celtas entraron en el Padornelo tocando la muiñeira” (*El bonsai* 143). In the words of Rivas, the instrument that it is

nearly impossible to leave Galicia without hearing is “buen símbolo de una fecunda reinención cultural” (“Galicia contada” 50). The bagpipe, although common to all Celtic, or supposedly Celtic, lands did not appear until the Middle Ages. Ethnographers agree that the music, instruments and clothing shared by Scotland, Ireland, Brittany and Galicia (among others) are not direct remnants of a Celtic past, but rather a result of two thousand years of maritime trade among these lands (Murado 99). Furthermore, these lands share much more than music, instruments and clothing, as we saw in the references to Hugh Trevor-Roper’s discussion of Highland tradition in Scotland. Many 20th and 21st-century scholars maintain that the Celtic past has been wildly exaggerated, when not directly invented, in other “Celtic” regions as well. In his discussion of the search for Celtic roots in the Welsh past during the Romantic period, Welsh historian Prys Morgan explains that, in the absence of a glorious recent past, a few 18th-century writers returned to the ancient history of their nation, which they embellished with gripping stories of Celtic heroes. Although these writers relied on “fairly unscientific” methods, the results were “a fashion for the Celts which amounted at times to a mania” (67). Morgan explains:

The Celts in fact had never been by name associated with the British Isles, but that did not really matter, for they were a magnificent race of conquerors who had thundered across Europe in their early history and archaeology. [...] The Celts reflected the fantasies of the age, and in Wales they provided the constricted, pathetically small nation, which had little to commend it in its present state, with an unimaginably grandiose past, by way of consolation. (68-69)

Once again, there are striking similarities between the creation and glorification of Celtic Galicia and that of other Celtic nations.

However, in spite of the scholarship of the past few decades that has attempted to de-mythify Galicia's Celtic past, *Celtismo* is "in" among the region's general population today, and has been for some time. In the 1960s, when politics became more liberalized and the nation saw a resurgence of regional nationalism, interest in Celtic culture was recovered by many young people as an expression of differentiation. Celtic music, symbols, and culture in general acquired a "local hippie-ism" in the peak era of large music festivals in Rías Altas, Ortigueira and elsewhere, and in the 1980s there was a revival of *atlantismo* in plastic arts (Rivas, *El bonsai* 145-46). This local hippie-ism is still present today. It is very apparent in certain bars and shops in Santiago, where the usually young owners and patrons sell or decorate their establishments with Celtic symbols, and have a distinct "Celtic hippie" look in their dress, hairstyle, jewelry, etc. The worship of nature in Celtic culture has also become somewhat trendy with the growth of neopaganism and New-Age movements. One need not look in bookstores, music stores or festivals for evidence of the pervasiveness of all things Celtic. Vigo's soccer team is Real Club Celta de Vigo, the name of Lugo's professional basketball team is Breogán, and you can buy bottles of water made by Fontecelta, or Leche Celta, in the grocery store, to name just a few examples.

Whether or not all of this *celtismo* is seen as good, bad, irritating or inconsequential for Galicians is relative. If one takes a quick stroll through any of the community's cities or other tourist spots, Santiago especially, he or she is guaranteed to find at least one shop selling jewelry with Celtic designs, CDs with Celtic music, fairy dolls and figurines, etc. (and, of course, some type of Camino-related paraphernalia). I am referring not only to souvenir shops, but also to fine jewelry and the region's famous ceramics, Sargadelos, which feature many Celtic symbols.

Many who benefit from the Celtic myth must be in no hurry to eliminate it. As Dorothy Noyes said, “Provincial regions increasingly need to live off their symbols” (11). Celtic culture has become a symbol of Galicia. Others, even if they do not benefit directly from the marketing of this Galicia, simply like or are used to the idea, even if they are somewhat skeptical or even indifferent about the specifics of the theories behind it. Artists like Murado and Rivas demonstrate frustration at the prevalence of this cliché, although Murado calls the *queimada* beliefs and other similar myths a “tópico inocente”, a harmless misconception. I will return to this topic, an important one in discussing ideas of the region’s cultural identity, later in this chapter.

“La Galicia tópica” in the region’s literature

Celtic Galicia is not the only cliché reinforced in pilgrim accounts as well as in the region’s literature.⁵⁶ Both Spanish and Galician literature has portrayed the region in terms of two extremes; the negative, *la Galicia del atraso*; and the positive, an idealized vision of a magical, mystical Galicia. The Celtic past discussed previously is just part of this second vision. Although with substantial differences among the works of each author, this imaginary vision appears in some of Valle-Inclán’s novels, as well as those of Álvaro Cunqueiro, Eduardo Pondal, and Rosalía de Castro, to name a few, despite the substantial difference in these authors’ works. Castro, married to the man whose name is forever inseparable from the idea of Celtic Galicia, says nothing at all in her poems about the Celts that fascinated Murguía. In some of her poems,

⁵⁶ Most *galeguistas* consider Galician literature to include only works written in Galician; therefore, works by authors like Valle-Inclán and Emilia Pardo Bazán, who wrote in Castilian, are not considered by this group to be part of the region’s literature. The definition of “Galician literature” that I use here refers to all works written by Galicians, regardless of the language in which they are composed.

however, fountains, trees and rocks speak, and the poet sings of the beauty of her land. In *Cantares Gallegos* (1863), which some consider the manual of *galeguidad*, the poet recreates rural Galicia, and does so with what Xesús Alonso Montero calls “una brisa de idealización” (*Rosalía* 50). The following lines offer an example:

Lugar más hermoso
non houba na terra,
que aquel que eu miraba,
que aquel que me dera.

Lugar más hermoso
no mundo n'achara,
que aquél de Galicia,
¡Galicia encantada!

Galicia frorida,
cal ela ningunha,
de froles cuberta,
cuberta de espumas (1. 80-92)

Ricardo Carballo Calero calls *Cantares Gallegos* the epic of a people; “[Son] una epopeya popular de ambiente, con héroes populares individuales que reflejan diversas facetas o encarnaciones del héroe colectivo verdadero, que es la Galicia campesina. Se trata de una épica democrática, de la que está proscrita la clase señorial” (25). Her heroes are nothing like Pondal’s; the only battles they fight are with poverty and the struggles of daily life, but Castro nonetheless praises the beauty of the everyday hero and her enchanting land.

Decades after the publication of *Cantares gallegos*, an eccentric Pontevedran created an artistic configuration of his homeland in works like *Sonata de otoño* (1902) and *Flor de santidad* (1904). In these two works, Valle-Inclán creates a fictitious Galicia with a nostalgic, idealized landscape, although drawing on real elements. The three principal elements in the author’s work

that remind us of his home región are, according to Francisco Fernández del Riego, “la incontaminada pureza de ese paisaje, su transfiguración artística, y la nostalgia del autor ante un paraíso perdido e incitante” (1). These elements are present throughout both *Sonata de otoño* and *Flor de santidad*. In the former, the fictional world is based on a traditional, paternalistic view of society, one in which 19th century rural Galicia has hardly changed since the Middle Ages (Díaz-Plaja 25). While historically this is true—we saw in Chapter 3 that the region was practically trapped in its feudal past—Valle-Inclán turns this feudal society into a fantasy world of beautiful, although crumbling, country estates with gardens, clouds, roses and the songs of birds; it is a magical world, a “Galicia soñada”. The peasants are “idealized and bucolic” figures (Gómez Marín 80-81). These hard-working, docile, kind-hearted people respect the benevolent noble classes to which they are subject. The beginning of the novel shows a peasant family who adores their master, and does not see *foros*, the land-holding practice that crushed rural Galicians for centuries, as an oppressive system at all. Just the opposite, as these laborers accept the feudal system as the natural order of God. In return, the nobles are generous when the peasants are unable to pay their dues, therefore representing an extremely favorable view of patriarchal society (35-37). The servants who work in the beautiful but decadent *pazo* are also obedient and pleasant. One of them is Florisel, a peasant boy who appears to be “el hijo de un antiguo siervo de la gleba”, an honorable youth “bautizado por las hadas” (*Sonata* 58, 56). The page seems to belong to a remote past, and the music of his flute and the songs of the birds he cares for embellish life in the mysterious, crumbling stone estate.

Valle-Inclán demonstrates a romantic fascination with the past, particularly with the traditional society and the nobility. He is preoccupied with the immortalization of this world, “la

Galicia clásica” through myth. The societies present in *Flor de santidad* and in *Sonata* are both representations of traditional and archaic worlds prior to the threat of modernity in late 19th and early 20th centuries. *Flor de santidad* is situated in the remote past, perhaps 500 years ago, and tells the story of Ádega, a primitive young orphan, visionary, mystic and shepherdess whom the narrator compares to “la zagala de las leyendas piadosas” (*Flor* 15). The work portrays legends, magic, and the sad but beautiful life of the peasant. Antonio Machado calls the work “leyenda en sabio romance campesino/ ni arcaico ni moderno/[...] leyenda campo y campo” (*Flor* 11). Valle-Inclán romanticizes the peasants and also captures their simplicity, their suffering, their faith—a mix of Catholicism and paganism—and their innocence. These humble, legendary people believe in saints, purgatory, God, *almas en pena*, healers, the evil eye, amulets to protect against this curse, and witches, all of which contribute to the mysterious environment (37). This “leyenda campesina” also has to do with the Camino de Santiago;⁵⁷ the shepherdess takes in a pilgrim whom she believes to be Christ himself, and the young girl will carry his baby.

The works in which Valle-Inclán romanticizes his land have become part of the Spanish literary canon (specifically *Sonata*), but the work of one of Galician literature’s most important figures also offers a fascinating vision of a mythical Galicia. The characters of Álvaro Cunqueiro are products of his vivid imagination. One of the characteristics of his work is the presence of fantastic elements in everyday life; legendary characters like Sinbad and the wizard Merlín co-exist with “normal”, ordinary characters, along with personalities from the past and the present. In some of his works, the dead are main characters who roam the paths of Galicia and interact

⁵⁷ One of the author’s short stories, “Mi hermana Antonia”, also involves the theme of Jacobean pilgrimage. This story appears in *Jardín umbrío* (1903).

with the living. The mythical characters are humanized, and at the same time, the ordinary are “elevated to the category of myth” (Bernárdez et al., 201). In addition to fantastical realism, another important characteristic of Cunqueiro’s work is the use of *materia de Bretaña*, including the character of Merlín in *Merlín e familia*. The author “decodifies” the legends by situating the action in Galicia, although in a symbolic space, and by relying on humor and irony (Gómez Sánchez and Queixas Zas 287). The Mondoñedo native’s blend of real and imaginary, and the frequent confusion between the two, creates a fascinating, legendary Galicia in his novels. Although his short fiction is less well-known, the author’s brief narratives, or “sketches”, including those collected in *Xente de aquí e de acolá* (1971), create a more specifically Galician world. These works are situated in the author’s home region, in concrete times and places unlike his novels—taverns and fairs around Mondoñedo—with the explicit intention of presenting “the essence of Galicia” (291). The fantastic elements still exist, but they belong to the Galician popular imaginary, including *trasnos* and *mouros*.⁵⁸ Cunqueiro’s work presents “the great mosaic of the popular Galicia” with its magic and its naïve, ironic fantasy (Bernárdez, et al. 204).

A darker image of the region in its literature

On one end of the spectrum we have the mythical Galicia of fairies and spirits; on the other, a poor, suffering Galicia, often in the works of the same writers mentioned earlier. Rosalía de Castro is known more for her defense of her people, and for her melancholic side, than she is

⁵⁸ Both are imaginary creatures in Galician folklore. *Trasnos* are an invisible type of demon, but are more mischievous than evil and are said to play tricks on people. *Mouros* are other supernatural creatures that in many stories inhabit *castros*, caves and *mámoas*. They are often associated with *meigas* or witches (Carré Alvarellos).

for the verses that celebrate *gaiteros*, *romerías* and folklore in *Cantares gallegos*. Even many poems in this earlier collection, “el reflejo poético del pueblo de su tierra”, are social poems that denounce the injustices and prejudices against her people (Carballo Calero 25). In *Follas Novas* (1880), the last section of poems, titled “As viudas dos vivos e as viudas dos mortos” reveals a region in despair, as the bleak realities of 19th-century Galicia forced so many of its residents to emigrate. These poems reflect the pain of those leaving, and especially that of the women who stay behind and struggle to survive. The following are the last lines of “¡Pra a Habana!”, a heart-wrenching poem about emigration:

Este vaise i aquel vaise,
e todos, todos se van:
Galicia, sin homes quedas
que te poidan traballar.
Tes, en cambio, orfos i orfas
e campos de soledad;
e nais que non teñen fillos
e fillos que non tén país.
E tes corazóns que sufren
longas ausencias mortás.
Viudas de vivos e mortos
que ninguén consolará (V.67-79)

The Galicia of *Follas novas* is that of “miseria negra” and melancholy. Emilia Pardo Bazán also paints a darker picture of Galicia in *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886) and *La madre naturaleza* (1887), as well as in some short stories like “Las medias rojas”. This story and others highlight realities that many Galician women faced in the time of the author (considered a

feminist in her era), including abuse, emigration, and the particularly harsh existence of the women who stayed behind, similar to the conditions described in Castro's poem above. The two novels mentioned by the Countess, meanwhile, are quite different from the works of the region's most famous poet. Castro recreates a rural Galicia, praising its beauty and denouncing its suffering, while the city is practically absent. Pardo Bazán also recreates a rural Galicia in *Los pazos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza*, but it is a savage world of animal instincts. The barbarous inhabitants of the region's countryside engage in adultery, drunkenness, violence, and even cold-blooded murder. They are suspicious of the "civilized" cities and their ways of life, and believe in witches, spells, and all sorts of superstitions. The *pazo* is in a state of ruin, and even the nobility, including the marquis Don Pedro, are uncultured and uneducated. The name of one of the main characters, Primitivo, is by no coincidence a perfect summary of rural Galicia as portrayed in these works. With *Los pazos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza*, Pardo Bazán did nothing to dispel the Galician stereotypes prevalent in 19th-century Spanish literature.

Valle-Inclán's vision of Galicia evolves throughout the years, as does Castro's, although his darker vision of the land resembles Pardo Bazán's much more than it does that of the Santiago-born poet. Unlike Castro's social poems, by the end of Valle-Inclán's "ciclo galaico", his artistic recreation of his homeland is completely detached from a specific time and particular circumstances. His representation of Galicia evolves from the traditional, idealized society we saw in *Sonata de otoño* to the same society in a state of decay in *Comedias bárbaras*. Even earlier, in *Flor de santidad*, there are elements of a dark world full of hunger and despair. The protagonist's parents, for example, died in a horrible famine, in which daily processions of hungry peasants "bajaban como lobos de sus casales [...] Pasaban silenciosos, sin detenerse,

como un rebaño descarriado” (*Flor* 19). These ragged peasants live tragic lives of misery, superstitious of everything around them. In *Romance de lobos* (1908), we also see the suffering of the poor and a preoccupation with social injustice. Yet what Valle rejects is not the injustice of the feudal system that created centuries of such misery, but rather, the very dismantling of this system, which eliminates the powerful noble class that so benevolently cares for the poor in *Sonata*, leaving them defenseless. The world of decrepit *pazos* and royal nobles as a nearly extinct race in *Los pazos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza* is similar to the rural Galicia found in *Romance de lobos*. The land that he creates in this drama, part of the trilogy of *Comedias bárbaras*, is one of “distorted lives ruled by medieval traditions, pagan superstitions, and animal passions” (Lima 26). The humble peasants of *Sonata* have become squalid beggars in a brutal, shadowy world, and their description borders on the grotesque. Azorín calls the decadent, primitive Galicia in this work “triste y trágica” (33).

More than a decade later, the Pontevedran’s *mundo galaico* has completely deteriorated in *Divinas palabras* (1919). In this “tragedia de aldea”, Galicia is the symbol of nature. It is a rural, natural and orderless world of open spaces in which man is reduced to his most primitive, savage state (Sobejano 29). This dark, almost esoteric world is populated by the poor, peasants, beggars, and the marginal figures of a criminal and a homosexual. All of them appear at fairs, in fields, and along paths, with a backdrop of moonlight, witches, and the mythical figure of the *trasgo cabrío*. Notably absent is the noble class, and the only authority, a much debilitated one at that, is the Church. The feudal world of *pazos* and nobles who mercifully cared for the poor is gone. Replacing this traditional society is a brutal, primitive world in which humans act not according to social constructs, but according to unbridled instincts. The result is

greed, lust, betrayal, and the grotesque death of the innocent young “idiota” Laureano. As Gonzalo Sobejano notes, however, the end of this “cuadro de existencia primitiva, fealdad física y pasiones bajas” is “santificado por el misterio impenetrable” (29). The sacristan’s plea for forgiveness for the woman ruled by lust is understood “en aquel mundo milagrero, de almas rudas” (Valle-Inclán 166). The “divine words” have a mysterious power in this savage world of human instincts and passions.

La Galicia Valleinclanesca in pilgrim accounts

Nearly one hundred years after the publication of these works, Valle-Inclán’s Galicia is still part of the Spanish imagination of this region. In his 1993 narrative *Rumbo a Santiago: Crónica viva del Camino*, Palencia native Javier Villán enters “la hermosa tierra” through O Cebreiro, as nearly all pilgrims do. There he stays with Anunciata, whom he immediately describes as resembling one of Valle-Inclán’s characters. The pilgrim explains, “Anunciata y el resto de la familia que cuida el mesón son ángeles con cuerpos de campesinos” (156). The sentence could be lifted directly from *Flor de santidad* or *Sonata de otoño*. According to what he notes later, Villán has read at least the latter title:

Cerca de Arzúa existió una fortaleza, guardada de desaprensivos caballeros que se dedicaban a explorar a los peregrinos. Antes de caer en un profundo sueño recordamos a Valle-Inclán y al marqués de Bradomín que, en la *Sonata de otoño*, paseó por el pazo de Brandeso, cerca de aquí, la melancolía de sus otoñales amores (176).

It is significant that it is *this* Valleinclanesque Galicia—the traditional, legendary Galicia of rural estates and docile peasants living in harmony—that Villán evokes, not the later Galicia

that we see in *Divinas palabras*. The pilgrim makes no mention of this “other” Galicia, even though there is a good chance that, since Villán is a poet, journalist and author of several books dealing with Spanish history (not to mention a bullfighting and theater critic) he is familiar with these other titles by Valle-Inclán. Besides the direct references to the work of the famous turn-of-the-century writer, Villán writes about Galicia as if he had in mind the very same fictional world depicted by Valle-Inclán in his earlier works. For example, he asserts that the beautiful region is full of treasures, and that “la creencia en la existencia de tesoros está muy arraigada en la cultura gallega” (166). The pilgrim writes about his conversations with a villager named Florián, who believes in these treasures—“Haberlos, hailos”, he says—and tells Villán stories about dwarves, their treasures, and other elements of Galician folklore (169-171). Villán also tells his readers that, “Agua y bosque son dos símbolos de Galicia, parte importantísima de su ser, que no nos dejarán en lo que resta de camino. Magia de los bosques, cultura del árbol al que se rinde veneración y culto” before going on to talk about the importance of trees in Galicia, which he says are essential to understand the “alma gallega” (158). Villán adores the region, and offers a perfect example of a pilgrim account that is intent on underlining the “Galicia mágica” cliché.

Opinions on the new “Galicia tópica”

Judging from the pilgrim accounts we have seen, it seems that Murguía, Pondal and the other writers who created a legendary Galicia in order to whitewash the region’s “black legend” have succeeded, although they did not live to see it. Foreign pilgrims (including non-Galician Spaniards) transmit some of the very ideas that Galician cultural revivalists tried to fix in the Spanish imaginary of the region. I must stress that, as we have seen, the idea of a paradisiacal

Galicia is not entirely new; what *is* indeed new is that it has become the prevalent view of Galicia from the outside (judging from pilgrim accounts), and the view that has replaced the region's old, unfavorable image. Now, the question is: What does this enchanting, yet idealized and cliché, new image mean for Galicia?

First, and most obviously, the prevalent idea of an enchanting region means that Galicia's image has greatly improved. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it does not mean that this image is false; it is simply *incomplete*. It would be difficult to deny the beauty of the region's countryside, but Galicia is not only hills, valleys and forests, and these have not been untouched or unmanipulated for hundreds of years, as some pilgrims suggest. Elderly men and women still do work the fields dressed in black and lead their cows down centuries-old paths, but there are also Galicians who wear Prada and drive their SUVs to work in the city. Pilgrims give not so much an inaccurate vision of the region as they do an incomplete one.

Earlier I quoted Murado in reference to some misconceptions about his community; specifically the idea of *queimada*'s supposed Celtic origins, as a "tópico inocente". Small details like this do seem harmless. In the bigger picture, however, the clichés go against what today's *galeguistas*, writers and intellectuals are trying to accomplish: the demythification of the mythified Galicia. In her article "De la identidad gallega nacional a la identidad gallega global", Cristina Sánchez- Conejero talks about Manuel Rivas' and film director Xavier Villaverde's attempts to dispel the myths about Galicia, many of which we have already discussed, and to create a new identity for the region. Sánchez-Conejero explains that,

El concepto de identidad gallega que propone Rivas en su obra se opone a todo tipo de "grandes narrativas", ya sea por parte del nacionalismo español o por parte del nacionalismo gallego. Es por esta razón que Rivas considera imperativa no sólo la

desmitificación de la imagen castellana de Galicia como comunidad de segundo orden, sino también la revisión de la supuesta identidad celta gallega. Ambos discursos, tanto el del nacionalismo español como el del nacionalismo gallego tienen un claro carácter "metanarrativo" y, además, adolecen de reduccionismo -cuando no de falsedad- en su presentación de la identidad gallega. (227)

The professor goes on cite Xoán González-Millán, who indicates in his *Resistencia cultural e diferencia histórica* (2000), that one of these effects of 19th- century Galician nationalists' attempts to erase their negative image by creating a Celtic past is "precisely the illusion of a national pseudo or proto-literature, the same thing that happened to Galician literature throughout the 20th century" (77). The cycle goes as follows: 19th century nationalists create a romanticized, falsified identity to whitewash another inaccurate identity, this one imposed by outsiders on Galicia. The region is left with a heroic past built on exaggerations when not on fiction, and the idea of this legendary Galicia begins to spread outside its borders, albeit slowly and incompletely. The struggle continues for decades, as the negative image of backward Galicia is still dominant, and early 20th-century Galeguistas continue to represent the legendary land of fairies and Celtic warriors in their literature. By the last few decades of the 20th century, their Galicia has displaced the undesirable Galicia, largely due to societal reasons and a glorification of traditional, pre-industrial life. In the last few decades, several Galician writers have been attempting to demystify the myth, a "metanarrative" that nationalists had propagated for so long. Sánchez-Conejero points out that the way to do this, as Manuel Rivas attempts to do in his work, is to promote a cultural identity and a national literature that do not focus only on center vs. periphery or on Spanish nationalism's "Galicia atrasada" vs. regional nationalism's "Galicia

celta/legendaria” (227). This is just the opposite of the works of pre-war writers like Risco and Otero Pedrayo, for whom

toda cultura gallega pasa o por el compromiso con la idea nacionalista o por la utilización de sus símbolos (fundamentalmente, la lengua, el folclore, y el paisaje). Se entiende, pues, en principio que toda producción cultural al margen de estas premisas queda fuera del interés del gallego. Y es esta condición previa la que determina en parte los posicionamientos a seguir. (Gaspar 51)

By the late 1950s, this tendency changed with “A Nova Narrativa Galega” (NNG). Most literary critics point to the years between 1956 and 1972 as the period for this new literature, which included the works of writers like Gonzalo Rodríguez Mourullo, María Xosé Queizán, Xohán Casal, and Camilo Gonsar. These artists were interested in experimentation with new techniques like interior monologue, more abstract and philosophical content, artificial literary worlds, non-heroic characters, and in the words of María Xosé Queizán, “the fight against sentimentalism that invades our literature” (qtd. in Bernárdez et al. 316). The purpose was to create a universal literature. The NNG writers preferred urban settings and intentionally avoided the rural Galicia that had been so prevalent in the region’s literary creation (287-294). Although Cunqueiro, Eduardo Blanco Amor and other members of previous generations criticized the new narrative, Queizán maintains that it was a progressive literature that attempted to reflect the changes in contemporary Galician society; “it is a result of our reality and has its foundations in our historic roots” (qtd. in Bernárdez et al. 317). Artists like Xosé Neira Vilas, on the other hand, continued to write about and situate their works in rural Galicia, or focus on regional themes like emigration in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Also, in the period immediately following the end of the dictatorship, many began writing about the past. Testimonial literature about the war and postwar

years was common, as was a preoccupation with Galician identity (368-370). Then from 1995 on, Galician narrative became extremely diversified. Rural and ethnographic narrative was scarce, but detective novels, humoristic works, and urban, experimental, *braví*, and postmodern narratives emerged. Among these artists are some of the most well-known names in Galician and in Spanish literature today, such as Suso de Toro and Manuel Rivas, as well as Miguel Anxo Murado, whose work is cited in this thesis, and Manuel Seixas and Xosé Carlos Caneiro (384-392).

Like the representatives of the Nova Narrativa, these younger writers reject the idea that Galician literature must deal with the “typically” Galician. In order to mold a new identity in the global era, Rivas suggests, this must be based on “real” information about the region’s language and culture today; for example, the fact that it produces not just milk and wood, but clothing by well-known designers, leather, ships, and more. The Coruñés author insists that the Galician language must be promoted, as well, as it has been in recent decades. Xosé Luis Barreiro Rivas, a politician and well-known political scientist at the Universidade de Santiago, also advocates the creation of a new identity “reconstructed upon the values of modernity”, which he insists is necessary for Galicia’s participation “as a self-identified nation, in the global dialogue of cultures, of economy and of political processes.” The scholar insists that Galicia must fashion a new identity in order to avoid becoming a “victim” of globalization and risk losing its distinctive social and political characteristics (70-71).⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Barreiro Rivas’ *A terra quere pobo* (2004) is an excellent book that also elaborates on the reasons behind Galicia’s historically weak nationalism, as well as regional nationalism today and other political, social and cultural concerns facing Galicia in the 21st century.

Implicit in the departure from the center vs. periphery, Spanish vs. Galician nationalism opposition is what Rivas calls breaking the “stigma of the periphery” (“Galicia contada” 8). To a great extent, the stigma has been broken, judging from the many glowing reports of the region written by pilgrims. At the same time, these accounts do nothing to combat the other cliché images of Galicia; instead, in most cases they add to them. The cycle referred to earlier continues as the idea of a rural, magical Galicia is reinforced by pilgrims. There is no mystery behind this. The Camino hardly seems like a place where one can possibly offer a vision of the “complete” Galicia. The Road cuts through some of the least developed parts of the community, avoiding evidence of factories, highways, and any sign of modern life whenever possible. It is the “Galicia profunda” of tiny villages, ancient churches and farmland. In this way, “the myth feeds reality while reality feeds the myth.” Nonetheless, as Murado points out, “There is one consolation. At least this myth is beautiful, and not entirely wrong” (48-49). The picture of Galicia that pilgrims offer is an incomplete one, as I said before. It is not *the* real Galicia, but it is nonetheless some part of *a* real Galicia, exaggerations, idealizations and all.

Clearly, the push by the region’s writers for the creation of a new identity that truly reflects the new Galicia is one objective, and the promotion of the Camino, which also involves marketing of the region in general, is another. It seems that the latter goal is backed by more powerful or influential forces than the former, an issue that I will return to in Chapter 6. First, however, I would like to address the question of how “ordinary” Galicians, not writers or artists, perceive their own culture. It is hardly surprising, given what we saw in earlier chapters, that not too long ago, Galicians were often ashamed of their origins around other Spaniards. We see this in Spanish literature as far back as the Golden Age. More recently, in his *Rethinking the Region*:

Culture, Institutions and Economic Development in Catalonia and Galicia (2000), Michael Keating found that the region still had a negative auto-perception: “Galego and Galician culture are still seen somehow as an obstacle to modernity... and [Cataluña] has successfully projected itself as a leader of an emerging Europe of the Regions, while Galicia continues to labour under a negative auto-stereotype” (23). First of all, this thinking seems to be more commonplace among the older generations, and secondly, I do not agree that we can equate Galicians’ perceptions of their language with that of their entire culture. It is true that there is still a stigma attached to speaking Galego, especially in large cities and in professional settings. This is certainly a challenge for those who work to promote the region’s language, but not all Galicians who speak primarily in Spanish —in the workplace or elsewhere —do so as an intentional rejection of Galego. Furthermore, the same stigma does not apply to regional culture, either for Spanish or for Galego speakers. Linguistic politics are often controversial, but the *muiñeira*, *empanada*, music festivals and other expressions of popular culture are far less divisive.

Today, most Galicians seem to be proud of their origins. This is particularly true for the younger generations born in the democracy, the first to grow up in an autonomous Galicia. Among these young people a cultural trend called the *movimiento bravú* arose in the 1990s. The term *bravú* refers to a “exaltación desacomplejada de lo gallego, la reivindicación festiva de lo local (incluso de los dialectos y los errores léxicos intencionados)” (Murado 101). Key parts of the movement were rock groups like *Heredeiros da Crus*, often from rural Galicia, who took pride in their region’s pop culture. Writers like Xurxo Souto and Santiago Jaureguízar were also important in initiating the *bravú* movement. Murado explains that this generation’s mentality is just the opposite of the “prudent inquiry into the *alma gallega*”, the obsession with *saudade* and

morriña of previous generations. For these young people, who unlike their parents grew up watching television and movies in *Galego* and learned it in school,⁶⁰ *galeguidad* is not a problem, but rather an obvious reality. Instead of *saudade*, these young people prefer a cliché with an opposite meaning, *arroutada*, which means something like “to do whatever one feels like doing without thinking about the consequences”. Murado calls the generation *bravú* or *xabarín* (after a popular children’s television program) “often adolescent and sometimes creative”, and considers them the first Galician “culture of the masses” since the fourteenth century (101).

For these post-Franco generations, who generally embrace their regional identity, the founding fathers of Galician nationalism have become popular heroes. Galician teenagers don T-shirts bearing the image of a John Lennon-like Castelao, complete with the Lennon glasses and the word “Imaxina” superimposed. In one survey, Castelao was voted the most popular Galician of the twentieth century (Rivas, “Galicia contada” 48). Some of the most popular television commercials in Galicia poke fun at, and at the same time celebrate, their people’s clichés. The wildly popular “Vivamos como galegos” commercials for the supermarket chain Gadis, which have hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube and have even been translated to several languages, are one such example. The lighthearted commercials play with stereotypes of Galicians, such as their melancholy and their reluctance to give a straight answer, the region’s rainfall, the importance of trips to the family’s *aldea*, etc. Souvenir shops have no shortage of T-shirts and other merchandise with similar types of jokes, usually with sayings in the region’s language. You can even be one of 80,000 people who “like” the once ridiculed Galician accent

⁶⁰ In some cases, this young generation is more proficient in Galego than their parents, who were educated under Francoism, when the language was not taught in schools. This phenomenon is primarily found in cities, where the regional language is less widely-spoken.

on the social network Facebook, or, better yet, you can have Galego as the language of your Facebook account, courtesy of the collective translations of its users. Galipedia —Wikipedia in Galician —has existed for eight years, and the presence of the Galician language on the web is constantly growing. All of this demonstrates the importance that the younger generations, with Internet as a powerful tool, have in promoting the use and the destigmatization of the region's language, as well as the promotion of their culture. The first generations born in an autonomous Galicia have grown up in a very different cultural panorama than their parents could have imagined, and these young people have helped to change the way the region as a whole perceives itself.

Chapter 6: A Revival of the Camino and a Rediscovery of Galicia

“Galicia pertenece hoy a ese mundo de la abundancia, aunque sea como periferia del pastel” (Rivas, “Galicia contada” 41).

So far, I have focused primarily on pilgrims’ perceptions of Galicia as evidence of a change in the region’s image. In this chapter I will offer other evidence of this transformation, how it relates to the Camino de Santiago, and how the recent revival of the Jacobean pilgrimage has affected the Community.

One example of the shift in portrayals of Galicia in recent years comes from a study of the touristic influx to Santiago de Compostela during the Holy Year of 1993, conducted by the Xunta de Galicia. Four thousand people were randomly surveyed in different parts of the city between July and September of 1993. Of these 4,000, all were non-Galicians; 456 were foreigners, and 3,544 were Spaniards. All were asked about the folconceptroniclowing: place of origin, tourist attractions/ other sites visited, characteristics of the trip and their stay in the city, and lastly, their perceptions and evaluation of Galicia. Three-quarters of the foreigners were European, and among the Spaniards, Catalans, Valencians, Madrilenians, Castilians and Andalusians, in that order, were the most numerous groups. Of those surveyed, a large number, although not a majority—36.9%—had done the pilgrimage. The study’s organizers report that

one of the most important conclusions—perhaps the most important in my opinion—is the following:

the massive influx of visitors to Galicia reveals a different image from that which the majority of the visitors had in mind: ideas like a general state of backwardness, of a region whose people are not very open, one in which traditional customs are given an excessive importance, more than the desire for innovation, gives way to an image of a region integrated in its own immediate social, economic and cultural environment. (Xunta de Galicia 91)

The study confirms almost exactly what modern pilgrim accounts written by non-Galicians report. For example: “foreign visitors perceive Galicia as a nation that in some ways remains anchored in the past. This conception of stagnation appears to be [...] motivated by causes that, to a greater or lesser extent, are based in reality” (91). The regional government’s study goes on to explain some of the factors that constitute this reality, which we have already discussed: the community’s geographical location in the northwestern corner of the country, isolated by mountains, and Galicia’s “peculiar culture”, whose roots are found primarily in rural spaces, which can explain why, from the outside, this culture is directly identified with “backwardness, poverty and misery” (*ibid.*).

The Xunta’s report contains some very interesting graphics, including one that indicates visitors’ images of Galicia before their arrival: the plurality, 36%, indicated that they were not familiar with the region and therefore had no preconceived notion; 20.8% thought of it as a traditional, rural area; a “green and rainy” country is what 16.4% expected; 10.8% associated “good food” with the region, 9.3% expected a “país atrasado”, around 3% expected a region “rich in monuments”, 2.9% stated no specific preconceptions, but rather a “good general image”, and 0.2% claimed “other” (92). Another graph shows the same visitors’ opinions after

visiting Galicia. Fewer than one in five, 18.4%, reported no change in their preconceived notions; 28.8% did not know or chose not to answer, and only 5.0% said that their visit to Galicia left them with a negative idea of the community. The majority of those surveyed, 44.5%, claimed to have a positive image, and specified that this perception was a result of warm and welcoming people, an agreeable climate, natural beauty, the region's modernization, an overall positive experience, and other unspecified factors. The small percentage, 5.0%, who were left with a negative impression listed reasons such as backwardness, unwelcoming people, an unpleasant climate, poor food, too much tourism and too much religion (93). Also noteworthy are the statistics for the overall evaluation of the visit to Galicia, not of the image of the region itself. An overwhelming majority —93.21%—rated their visit between 7 and 10 on a scale of 1 to 10 (97). Overall, the information given by the respondents in these surveys closely resembles the evaluations of the region that we have seen in modern pilgrim accounts. In both the survey and the pilgrim accounts, the vast majority is pleased with Galicia, and only a few retain a negative image after having visited.

Political scientist Michael Keating, who studies regional development and devolution in the European Union, also notes an inversion of previous stereotypes. He maintains that as far as the community's social structure,

Many of the stereotypical qualities of the Galician peasant can be turned around and seen as virtues. Reflectiveness, formerly a euphemism for insecurity, is now seen as a positive trait. Lack of dogmatism, formerly a mark of dependence on outside views, may be seen as openness. Social equilibrium, formerly synonymous with stasis, may now permit measured change (17).

As is the case with the struggle between modernization and tradition, in which Galicia's stereotypical backwardness can be turned around and seen as preservation of a society that is quickly fading in the Western world, in Keating's example there has been a change not in the region's social structure itself, but in society's values, that contribute to a more positive evaluation of the community.

“Un nacionalismo tranquilo”

Another reason for a more positive vision of Galicia is the perception that it poses little threat. Murado explains that,

Desde la llegada de la democracia, y en un panorama político dominado por los conflictos entre el centro y la periferia, Galicia parecía dar un ejemplo de mesura (que en realidad era más bien indiferencia) en estas cuestiones. De nuevo, comparados con los catalanes y vascos, los gallegos parecían ‘no haber jamás promovido disturbios ni haber admitido desvaríos separatistas’ como decía don Alejandro.⁶¹ El ascenso del nacionalismo gallego en los últimos años empieza ya a modificar esa percepción, pero el fenómeno resulta tan confuso para el español medio que esto todavía no ha tenido un impacto notable. (88)

Murado clarifies that “Don Alejandro” is not entirely correct, as Galicia has had its uprisings, and is not as conservative as it is believed to be, but comparatively, the region's nationalism is “light”. It has always had a lower profile than the nationalist movements of the other two historical communities, partially because Galicia never had the *fueros*, which were provincial

⁶¹ Murado is referring to a quotation by Alejandro Mola in 1898. The rest of Mola's quotation explains that Galicia is patriotic for what he perceives is its lack of separatist “nonsense”, and for having instead always satisfied, “con la mayor conformidad y puntualidad los tributos y gabelas, sin asonadas ni motines” (qtd. in Murado 87).

privileges or charters that other parts of Spain enjoyed for centuries. *Fueros* varied from province to province, but as a general rule they granted certain provinces a degree of autonomy by allowing them to maintain their own political institutions and laws, even though they formed part of a larger kingdom. These provincial privileges limited the power that the monarchy exercised over the province and also conferred it economic advantages, such as exemption from taxation (Carr 63). The kingdom of Navarra, for example, was incorporated into the kingdom of Castilla in 1492, but its *fueros* were maintained until the 19th century. Cataluña belonged to the Crown of Aragón, but like Navarra, maintained its *fueros* for centuries and functioned almost as a kingdom within another kingdom.

Galicia, on the other hand, had long been a province of other crowns—first of León, and later of Castilla. Its status as a province meant that it assimilated the laws and political organization of the kingdom of which it formed part. Galicia was different culturally and linguistically, but it did not enjoy the degree of self-rule that historical communities Cataluña and the Basque Country did. In the early 18th century, Felipe V was successful in limiting the regional privileges that gave Cataluña, Valencia and Aragón (all formerly part of the Crown of Aragón) a “quasi-independent status”, thus creating a centralized Spanish state, even though the Basque provinces and Navarra would maintain their privileges until the 19th century (Carr 63). The *Decretos de Nueva Planta* that eliminated the *fueros* meant that Castilian would be the sole language of government, and that most of the region’s institutions would be abolished. Cataluña, Valencia and Aragón became, essentially, provinces of Castilla. Although it would not be until the 19th century that Navarra and the Basque provinces—Guipúzcoa, Alava, and Vizcaya—would lose their provincial privileges, what they and Cataluña had in common was a strong reaction to the

imposition of the Spanish state. The loss of *fueros* gave these historical regions a reason to form strong nationalist movements, which was not the case in Galician history.

In addition, Xosé Núñez Seixas explains that some of the reasons for Galicia's historically weaker nationalism have to do with

the extreme fragmentation and instability of Galician nationalism, which has undergone several splits and party changes; the radicalization of nationalist demands in the transition period; and the great difficulties in consolidating any moderate right-wing nationalist organization in this region, that have been aggravated by the regionalist turn taken by the right wing Popular Party (PP) since 1980. Thus, the political expression of Galician nationalism has been overwhelmingly monopolized by the left, mainly by two tendencies: the Marxist-Leninist left, eventually called the Galician Nationalist Block (Bloque Nacionalista Galego, BNG), and the reformist socialist and democratic left, represented by the Galician Socialist Party-Galician Left (PSG-EG). The latter current was subsumed into the former at the beginning of the 1990s. (320)

Núñez Seixas' comments demonstrate that, as Murado insists, Galicia is not as conservative as Spaniards believe, even though this idea is part of a favorable image of the region in Spain. Manuel Rivas adds that there is a strong sense of identity in Galicia, but that it is not exclusive. Those who claim a desire for independence from Spain are a small minority, and when Galicians are nationalists, they tend to prefer "un nacionalismo tranquilo." The A Coruña native reports that in 2001, 55% of Galicians surveyed claimed to feel "as Galician as they do Spanish"; 27% reported feeling "more Galician than Spanish", and just 7.8%, "only Galician" ("Galicia contada" 52).

In other areas besides politics, the region similarly fails to intimidate. Its population is roughly half of that of Madrid, and until recently Galicia did not compete with the rest of Spain

in much of anything, neither industry nor power. In spite of the enormous advances in modern communications, Galicia is still a distant province, and this fact, along with its social and political “autismo” are what have permitted it to maintain the prestige of “quien es singular pero no amenazante” (Murado 88).

Emigration and Galicia’s new image in Spain

Nostalgia and sentimentalism as a result of the region’s long history of emigration play a part in positive associations with Galicia as well. Murado maintains that for many Spaniards in Madrid, Barcelona, or Bilbao, Galicia is the homeland of at least one of their grandparents, therefore endearing the region to them and sometimes romanticizing it. The same *morriña* (nostalgia) applies for millions of foreigners that are descendants of the “tierra de adiós”. In 2006, it was estimated that 1.2 million Galicians lived outside of Spain, and another half-million lived outside of their home region, but within Spain (Gemie 130). This alone is a large number, and it is impossible to calculate the millions of descendants of emigrants who are alive today. Some of these return to their family’s homeland as pilgrims, like Buenos Aires native Encina Amatriain’s wife and fellow pilgrim Ana, whose grandmother was Galician. Ana seems to know little about her family’s past, or perhaps the author simply chooses not to include this information, but Espido Freire is a perfect example of the child of Galician emigrants who has an intense nostalgia for the land. The novelist relates the idea of Galicia that her parents taught her:

En la mente de nuestros padres nada había cambiado desde hacía siglos: el mundo que conservaban en el recuerdo era el mismo que el de sus padres, salvo tal vez por el tren, las vacunas, que tanto apreciaba la abuela, y la luz eléctrica. Y únicamente aquellos adelantos eran vistos con agrado [....]. La idea que nos transmitían era la de una

Galicia idílica, hermoseada en el recuerdo, con alimentos puros y aire limpio, heredera directa de los poemas de Rosalía de Castro y la nostalgia que destilaba la copla española (191).

Later, Freire discusses the deception that she and other children of emigrants experience upon returning to the land and discovering that,

El paisaje que se extendía ante nosotros no se correspondía al dibujado por nuestros padres, y la decepción nos dolía tanto a nosotros como a ellos. Pero a nadie se le pasaría por la cabeza elegir otro destino en nuestro tiempo libre, encaminarnos a los cielos más luminosos pero menos profundos del Mediterráneo. Aquella era la tierra más hermosa del mundo, y aunque no lo fuera, a nadie importaba: cuando uno se encuentra en el lugar en el que enterraron a sus antepasados, hasta las piedras murmuran algo entre susurros. (193)

The award-winning novelist's *Hijos del fin del mundo* may be the most eloquent pilgrim account I have read. Freire speaks on behalf of other descendants of emigrants in professing her deep love and nostalgia for her ancestral land, which helps to better understand one of the reasons behind the overwhelmingly positive view of Galicia in 21st century Spain. Even for those without any family ties in this green corner of the country, Murado maintains that for most Spaniards, Galicia is a vacation spot that rural tourism and the Camino de Santiago have turned into a region “universally considered as beautiful and hospitable”. He embraces this new reality, insisting that, “no hay sino que felicitarse de esa nueva actitud, que tanto se ha hecho esperar” (88).

It seems clear that emigration has positively influenced Spaniards' and some foreigners' perceptions of Galicia, but it is also important to ponder how the phenomenon has influenced the region's self-perception. In earlier chapters I briefly discussed the socioeconomic realities of emigration, and this defining characteristic of the region has also played a part in the creation of

its identity. The idea of the region's diaspora, and of Galicia as a "global aldea" is a very real part of Galicia's sense of self. Emigration has historically been seen by some Galicians as a form of abandonment, especially for those that learned of their neighbors' or family members' successes abroad while they remained in the homeland, with all of the difficulties of life there. On the other hand, emigrants often sent money home, and there simply was not enough land in Galicia for all to stay, thanks to the constant subdivision of already tiny plots. Emigration was a necessity, and some saw it as such. Alfonso Castelao, Vicente Risco and the *Nós* group saw emigration as an obstacle to the advancement of their land, although in *Sempre en Galiza* (1944) Castelao stated, "es preferible emigrar, para ganarse la vida, que morir de hambre en el terruño nativo" (33). For those who emigrated, there was at least a sense of what could be in a new land and a new life. For those who stayed behind, emigration created the absence of what could have been, and further hindered the region's progress.

Regardless of these differences in attitude towards emigration, there is an understanding both today and in the past several centuries, particularly in the 19th and 20th, of Galicia as a community that extends beyond its physical borders. The *Nós* generation fully recognized the displaced *gallegos*, among whom Castelao and some of his contemporaries found themselves during Spain's Civil War, as part of the Galician nation. In *Sempre en Galiza*, Castelao unequivocally defines the Galician nation not as an abstract idea, but as a concrete geographical space: "La patria es la Tierra. La Tierra que nos dio el ser y que nos recogerá en la muerte como simiente de nuevas criaturas" (47). However, he also defines the nation as an affective space: "¿Y quién podría abolir la morriña de los gallegos que viven fuera de los lares nativos? Porque ese sentimiento esencial es fecundo para crear maneras propias del ser y, por lo tanto, de la

cultura..." (47). During Franco's dictatorship, numerous Galicians abroad advanced the cause of Galician nationalism. *Sempre en Galiza*, often considered the canonic work of Galician nationalism, was written and published in the Americas. Most literature composed in the Galician language during the Franco years, in fact, was created and published in Latin America. The *Centros gallegos* in Buenos Aires, Mexico, Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America (and Europe) were centers of cultural and literary activity, often led by the exiles during the war, but also supported by the large communities of emigrants already settled in those lands. Buenos Aires has often been referred to as the fifth Galician province, and while politically it never has been part of Galicia, perhaps it has been spiritually.

Another aspect of this Galician diaspora is the influence of the emigrants who have returned to their homeland, bringing with them new customs, traditions, and even new family members, from abroad. These elements have been incorporated in Galician culture. Beautiful *indiano* houses built in American architectural styles spot the region's landscape today, serving as reminders of Galicians' experiences in the Americas (although these usually reflect the positive experiences of those who "made it" and could return). In Betanzos, the main plaza is named after the García Naveira brothers, 19th-century emigrants who achieved great success in Argentina and spent a great deal of their newfound wealth in their native Betanzos upon returning. Among their numerous contributions to the medieval town is the Parque do Pasatempo, a large theme park. One of the park's most interesting features is a wall of clocks that display the time all over the world: in Chicago, Berlin, Budapest, St. Petersburg, and in over thirty other cities. The largest clock, located in the center of the wall, gives the time in Buenos Aires. Monuments like these demonstrate the Galician sense of identity as a global village. There

is no denying the fact that the *patria* is first and foremost the geographical space of Galicia, but Galicians do not lose sight of the fact that a common culture, and a common nostalgia or *saudade* for that geographical space, unites them. The physical nation may be small, but the affective one spans the globe.

Perhaps this looser construction of the *patria* also helps to explain why Galician nationalism has historically not been as strong as Basque or Catalan nationalism. Unlike Galicia, the other two historical regions experienced industrial growth in the 19th century, and again in the 20th century, therefore attracting immigrants from other parts of Spain, as we saw in Chapter 2. Immigrants from southern Spain were often marginalized in Cataluña, where they were seen as a threat to Catalán culture, and the Basque country, whose industrial cities also attracted immigrants, experienced a similar phenomenon. Galicia, on the other hand, has been impacted by emigration rather than immigration. This has created an inclusive sense of identity; more inclusive, perhaps, than that of regions not strongly affected by emigration. One does not have had to live in Galicia for generations in order to be accepted by fellow Galicians as such. A region that, despite stagnation on many fronts, has also largely been defined by movement—through emigration, pilgrimage, and traveling sailors and fishermen—does not and cannot have the same criterion for inclusion as, for example, the Basque Country. In short, the same subdued, less exclusive form of nationalism shaped by emigration, economic conditions and the other factors mentioned above that has long frustrated Galician nationalists may be part of a generally positive perception of the region in 21st-century Spain.

Changes in late 20th-century Galicia

It is not only Spaniards' and foreigners' perceptions that are changing; Galicia has in fact undergone substantial transformations in the last fifty years. I have already discussed some of the most obvious changes, such as the region's statute of autonomy and recognition of Galician as the co-official language, but there are many more to be considered. Throughout the 20th century, the region's fate began to improve with money sent home from emigrants, along with the return of many of these emigrants themselves, the growth of the farming sector, and commercialization, even though the interior changed very little until the 1960s or even the 1980s in some of the most marginal regions of the western mountainous zones (Armas Diéguez 100). While communications were poor at the time of the transition, spending on infrastructure was high in the 1980s, as it was elsewhere in Spain, and this brought Galicia's roads, telecommunications and airports up to European standards (Keating 20). The port cities of A Coruña and Vigo have grown substantially in the second half of the 20th century, and both acquired new universities. In 1958 Vigo became the site of a factory for the multinational French car company, Citroën, and in 2007, over half a million vehicles were produced there. In 1962, a large oil refinery opened in A Coruña, and a few years later in the same city, a young man by the name of Amancio Ortega started a humble business that would become the multinational clothing chain Zara. Ortega is now the CEO of Inditex, which in 2008 overtook The Gap to become the world's largest fashion retailer. The A Coruña native (who still resides there) is the richest man in Spain, and one of the ten wealthiest men in the world. More important for the region has been the considerable modernization that its fishing industry has undergone in the past few decades. The tourist industry has also grown exponentially, largely due to the Camino. As of early 2011, the only two

Autonomous Communities in Spain with more hotels than Galicia are Cataluña and Andalucía (EFE, “Galicia es la tercera comunidad”).

Quality of life has improved with these changes, as it has throughout Spain. Overall, maintains Sharif Gemie, “While economists and sociologists will still argue that Galicia is a relatively deprived area within the EU, no one could doubt the extent to which Galicia has changed in recent decades”, and the author claims that in most cases, the region’s technological, social and cultural development has resulted from the Xunta de Galicia’s direction (140). Significant progress across the region is undeniable, but so is the fact that many challenges remain. For example, Spain’s modernization and incorporation into Europe have posed new problems for Galicia. Michael Keating explains,

EU membership has increased the peripherality of Galicia and poses challenges to its traditional industries. Fishermen have come into conflict with those of other states over access and face problems of stock depletion. Traditional industries and agriculture face competition from Europe and the imposition of quotas, notably in milk and steel, while the farmers fail to get the same benefits as the large producers of northern Europe and from the Common Agricultural Policy. (14)

One pilgrim account seems to note the effect of these policies on Galician farming. Juan José Sanz Jarque, who enjoyed speaking with the locals during his 1993 pilgrimage, initiated a conversation with an elderly rancher and farmer in Piedrafita, just across the Galician border with Castilla y León. After discovering that the man had fought in the Galician division in Aragón during the Spanish Civil War, the two bonded over their common history and the rancher/farmer told Sanz Jarque about his difficulties: “Pasamos aquí por el peor momento que conozco. No vendemos los terrenos ni nada y ni nos dejan criar. En las casas ya no tenemos

verduras, ni carnes de vaca, ni nada, no como antes. Nos perjudican para favorecer a otros y somos mucho más pobres" (357). The pilgrim went on to explain that "nuestras relaciones con Europa era una obsesión lamentable para él frente a su mejor situación anterior con los productos que manejaba, y frente a sus ilusiones con América donde, desde siempre, tenía tantos paisanos que se iban para allí" (ibid). Sanz Jarque left preoccupied with the sociological reality of the town, which after the closing of a nearby mine, he says, is "pura economía de subsistencia" (361). Nevertheless, he reported that the unanimous sentiment among the farmers he meets is the desire to modernize agriculture and to stay put, now that the once ubiquitous temptation to emigrate has passed (362).

Recent statistics on the region offer a conflicting picture. In 2009, the average salary for Galicia (1,615 euros per month) was the lowest in Spain, 13% less than the average for the rest of the country (1,858 euros/month). At the same time, Galicia's average salary was among those that increased the most in the country (EFE, "El salario medio"). In 2010, the region's unemployment level was 15.69%, lower than the national average of 20.72%; however, Galicia was also the region with the largest increase in unemployment between 2009 and 2010 (EP, "Galicia registra"). Nevertheless, in early 2011, Eurostat (the Statistics Office of the European Commission) reported that Galicia is richer than thirty-five regions of the European Union's most prosperous countries. That means that 2.8 million Galicians are richer than over seventeen million French residents, nine million Germans and six and a half million Britons (Oliver). This data suggests that the divide between Galicia and the most prosperous regions of Spain is not as drastic as it was in the 1960s and 70s, but that the region still faces inequalities and many challenges for the future.

A change of scenery

In addition to the new industries, universities and the other transformations discussed above, the Camino itself in Galicia has undergone a good deal of modification. The most deliberate and drastic transformations took place in preparation for the 1993 Xacobeo, but there were many changes before this Jubilee Year as well. In fact, the lands surrounding the pilgrimage routes underwent more intense transformations in the last half of the 20th century than they had in hundreds of years (Armas Diéguez 104). Many of these changes have come from agricultural reforms, including a restructuring of cattle farming. Armas Diéguez explains that, “With an unusual speed, the Camino was a witness to how its people were incorporated into an *open, commodified economy*. The circulation of money took care of changing the scenery” (104). The scholar explains that the changes were more technical than structural, therefore affecting more the products and the means of production than the structure and distribution of property. He stresses that “The landscapes [of the Camino] have not changed for autochthonous needs, but rather for *external factors*” (*ibid.*). In other words, changes came to the region’s farming system due to market necessities and other external factors (higher standard of living in Spain, therefore more demand for meat and dairy, for example). These factors led to new formulas for production and commercialization of the Galician countryside, and pilgrims today will see both more mechanized labor and more diversified crops and animals, mostly dairy cows. Overall, while the Galician farming industry has made many advances in the last half century, Armas Diéguez stops short of stating that its rural areas are definitively modernized. He points out that that there are still many challenges, such as lack of long-term planning and long-term political intervention (107).

Among the challenges and goals of rural development is a move away from the topical Galicia discussed earlier: the rural Galicia, land of “a million cows”, as one of Rivas’ works is titled. This may be a cliché, but it also is one rooted in reality. Hoinacki, Mullins, Freire, and numerous other pilgrims mention the omnipresence of, and the smell of, cows in Galicia. Author Espido Freire, daughter of Galician parents, confesses that the animals “están unidas en mi mente a lo más entrañable de Galicia, a lo más duro y tribal, también” (152). She maintains that cows are more than just a source of income; many have names just as pets do, and are very important for rural *gallegos*. Freire later describes images that call to mind collections of old black and white photographs of the region’s farmers; “Durante el recorrido por las tierras gallegas, aún podré ver a algún anciano con la boina calada y una camisa de franela a cuadros, guiando por los cuernos, bien amarrados, a una pareja de vaquitas” (153). Some pilgrim accounts give the impression that there are more cows than people in parts of Galicia. Encina Amatriain reports that he and his girlfriend were almost run over by the animals on several occasions, and others share similar stories. José Leira López, a professor at the Universidade da Coruña and one of the contributors to *Aulas no camiño: Un estudio multidisciplinario da realidade galega que atravesan os camiños de Santiago*, explains that he is eager to get beyond this image:

We would like to contribute to breaking the image of an ultra-conservative, rural and traditional Galicia. We have seen how, even in the most agrarian *ayuntamientos*, mechanization and rationalization processes are being produced in the number and the extension of the parcels of land, as well as diversification with the introduction of new crops, and repopulation and sustainable forest usage. Also with the livestock we can observe better care and better planning to increase its output, and to carry out a more adequate commercialization. (140)

The author also notes the growth of tourism, specifically rural tourism, and changes in patterns of living. More people settle in small towns which grow and contribute to modernization, as well as introduce a new mentality in residents about their social organization. The family, which has always been the backbone of traditional Galicia, still maintains that role, but is now accompanied by a larger network of groups and organizations: political parties, unions, cooperatives and all types of associations that contribute to the generation of processes of modernization (Leira López 140).

Another significant and visible change since the mid-20th century is the progressive depopulation of the countryside. Triacastela and Piedrafita are just two locations on the French Road that lost half of their population between 1950 and 2000 (Armas Diéguez 112-113). Ghosts form an important part of Galicia's folklore, and ghost towns form an increasingly large part of its landscape. At the beginning of the 21st century, around thirty *aldeas* or villages lost their last inhabitants; in 2008 another seventy-six were added to the list of ghost towns, and the following year sixty-three more became abandoned (Vázquez). The INE (National Institute of Statistics) reports that in addition to the community's nearly 1,400 uninhabited villages, an even larger number- 8,000- have less than ten inhabitants ("Galicia para el mundo"). Northern Irish pilgrim Bert Slader makes note of this phenomenon in 1985, correctly presuming that a handful of deserted villages he saw were a result of a rural exodus. He also saw several deserted schools, which the Xunta would later convert into pilgrim hostels. Earlier, in 1974, British pilgrim and filmmaker Edwin Mullins notices that while the medieval city of Portomarín "has entirely vanished, engulfed in a reservoir which holds back some of the plentiful rainfall of Galicia against its traditional dispersal towards Portugal", the new town built to replace it was practically

empty (193). The reconstructed church of San Juan is pristine, as if no one had stepped foot in the building, and

the entire town reminded me of a film-set that the removal-men had forgotten to dismantle after the cameramen had departed. Only the sight of two long-horn cows led ever-so-slowly over the new bridge which has replaced the one built by Pierre le Pèlerin suggested this was a town with some sort of life of its own, and not just an architectural folly waiting to discover why it was here at all. (194)

Portomarín, which now has nearly 2,000 inhabitants, is no longer so lifeless. Some of Galicia's abandoned villages will likely be rehabilitated, but this is not the case with all of them, and as the younger population moves towards the cities and the coast, the rural population continues to age. Galicia has the distinction of having the third oldest population⁶² in Spain, with nearly one quarter of its inhabitants over the age of sixty-five and at the same time is tied with Asturias for the lowest birth rates in Spain (Sampedro). Each year, there are thousands more deaths —sometimes nine or ten thousand more —than there are births in the region (Gemie 129). The so-called demographic pyramid for Galicia is not only the worst in all of Spain, but also in all of Europe (Punzón). Manuel Rivas is not joking when he remarks that Castelao's famous “El gallego no protesta, emigra” saying would today be modified to “El gallego no protesta, no nace” (“Galicia contada” 48).

These statistics help to explain why so many pilgrims report seeing mostly older villagers working the fields. Teresa Simal calls the Galician leg of the Road “La Galicia callada, de pueblos habitados por mujeres cuidando vacas, donde hombres y jóvenes tienen poca presencia. Son pueblos en los que no oyen las voces y las risas de los niños. Todo es silencio, apenas roto

⁶² Castilla La Mancha and Asturias are first and second by a small margin.

por el mugido de las vacas o el de la carretera” (159). On his way to Finisterre, Conrad Rudolph reports, “An old woman was working in the field, all alone, no village or house in sight, wearing the traditional black of a widow and struggling with an old, heavy hoe, probably hand forged, the likes of which certainly couldn’t be bought today” (42). The woman, who is friendly when she sees that Rudolph is a pilgrim, has an “aged, even ancient” face tanned from working in the sun, and appears to have had “a very long life of hard work and exposure to the elements” (*ibid*). In 1991, five years before Rudolph’s trip, a large percentage of the population of several locales along the Camino was over the age of sixty. In Palas de Rei, for example, the residents over sixty accounted for around 40% of the population (Leira López 141).

On the other hand, today’s pilgrims will also see new spaces that have appeared in recent years, such as a greater number of *pazos* or other types of ancestral houses that have been rehabilitated, often for the growing industry of rural tourism, an industry that also is responsible for the recovery of local crafts, cuisine and customs (Armas Diéguez 111). These changes do not go unnoticed by pilgrims. In the small village of Boente, Pelayo Cortázar describes the pilgrim’s refuge as “uno de los que tienen más encanto paisajístico de cuantos ha visto el caminante a lo largo de todo el Camino de Santiago. Está formado por un conjunto de casas de piedra rurales, totalmente restauradas, con un extenso parque posterior que desciende hasta los meandros del río” (185). Other recent additions are spaces for leisure, hiking, sailing, canoeing, horseback riding and other activities, as well as for the sale of local products, such as cheese in Arzúa or a sweet called *melindres* in Melide. Armas Diéguez believes that this type of development allows pilgrims to see that, despite the grim reality revealed by the statistics above, there is a “margin of hope” (112).

Xacobeo 1993 and the renovation of the Camino

An issue that has become apparent in several narratives is the difference between pilgrim accounts written before the early 1990s, specifically before the 1993 Xacobeo and its substantial renovations of the Camino itself, towns, hostels, etc., and those written after 1993. That year, the Xunta built a ninety-bed refuge in O Cebreiro for pilgrims, who previously had to sleep in the nine *pallozas* of the town. In fact, the ancient hilltop town doubled in size between 1974 and 1998 (Gitlitz and Davidson 305). The government also created cement markers to indicate the route every five hundred meters, turned abandoned schoolhouses and other buildings into refuges roughly every ten kilometers, and changed the route itself to avoid highways when possible, among other modifications (Frey 141). Many pilgrims notice and appreciate these changes. Hermenegildo de la Campa, on a pilgrimage with a group of fellow Andalusians led by a Jesuit priest, reports that, “Los últimos 60 km del Camino de Santiago los han mejorado mucho en los últimos años. Se han arreglado los caminos, se han plantado árboles que den sombra al peregrino, se han enlosado las calles y plazas de los pueblos por donde pasa el Camino y se han restaurado los puentes antiguos” (191). Other pilgrims are pleased with better infrastructure and lodging, although some complain that they resent too much meddling by the government, over-commercialization, and the loss of authenticity.

While nearly all pilgrims are impressed with Galicia, and several claim it as their favorite part of the Road, the community is also home to one of the Way’s greatest disappointments, in part due to the renovations for Xacobeo 1993. Numerous pilgrims complain about the massive refuge that was constructed by the government at Mount Joy, just outside of Santiago de

Compostela, and then reportedly sold to a private firm (Hoinacki 262). It was here that, for centuries, pilgrims finally could catch a glimpse of the holy city toward which they had spent weeks, even months, traveling. Many broke into tears of joy at the sight—hence the name—but today reaching Mount Joy is anti-climatic. Instead of the towers of the cathedral, pilgrims see modern buildings, traffic, construction, and a landscape “disfigurado” by urbanism (Simal 186). Biescas Vignau is horrified with the monument built in memory of Pope John Paul II’s trip there, and complains that the very spot where thousands of pilgrims throughout the centuries cried with joy is now “afeado por semejante monstruosidad” (172). Mount Joy is easily, the Basque pilgrim says, the worst part of the Camino. Canadian author and pilgrim Jane Christmas quips that the views from the mountain of the city’s traffic lights and construction work “put the ‘grim’ in ‘pilgrimage’” (264), and Hoinacki refers to the once breathtaking spot as “a blight on the hill” (263). Suso de Toro even dubs it “Monte de Decepción” (185). Another common complaint is the unenthusiastic, when not outright cold, reception of *hospitaleros* in Galicia. Those who work in the hostels throughout the region are public employees, whereas in other communities along the Road, volunteers, often belonging to pilgrim associations in Spain and abroad, tend to the travelers. Several pilgrims note the difference between the attention they receive from paid employees and from enthusiastic volunteers.

The recent changes to the Road do influence pilgrims’ experiences, but the lives of the residents who live along the Camino are undoubtedly more directly affected, for better or worse, by these modifications. Suso de Toro sees the intervention as a positive force for his region, and states, “The pilgrim who passes through Galicia will verify that the Xunta had made a strong wager for the Camino; if investment of private and European funds can be seen in other places,

here it is seen even more. And I believe that this is good" (135). The author points out that there are more and better refuges, and old schools that had been abandoned have now been put to use to lodge pilgrims, although he admits that the Xunta has made some "intervenciones a la brava" that affected parts of the Way. One of the communities affected is Arca, a village eighteen kilometers east of Santiago where the government made several changes in preparation for the 1993 Holy Year without consulting its inhabitants. Nancy Louise Frey interviewed many locals in Arca and reported,

Some of the fountains in the area were destroyed and never repaired by the government. The village's refuge has hot water, a privilege some villagers do not have. One man commented that the Camino is good because it brings life to the village, but at the same time he has to pay for hot water so pilgrims should as well (none of the refuges in Galicia charge a fee, so they rely on pilgrims' donations). Many pilgrims who take hot running water for granted do not pause to consider this is a luxury. For the villagers, the irony was the garbage pick-up: before 1993 there was none; in an effort to clean up the Camino for foreign pilgrims and the press the Galician government began the service. This type of whitewashed façade is typical of the thinking of Santiago's mayor, Xunta officials, and others involved with exploiting the Camino for short-term benefit (149).

In addition to the government's intervention, some pilgrims damage the towns and land along the Camino, even if unintentionally. In August 2010, a pilgrim near Costa da Morte set fire to the clothing she had worn on the journey, in accordance with a tradition said to be of pagan origin, then fled the scene as the nearby vegetation went up in flames, causing even more fires after the initial outbreak was contained, and almost reaching a nearby lighthouse at Finisterre. As a local journalist explained at the time, "la llegada masiva de peregrinos es una fuente de riqueza y un motivo de orgullo para los fisterráns, pero últimamente también se está

convirtiendo en un grave problema para la conservación de uno de los enclaves más emblemáticos de la Costa da Morte y de toda Europa, como es el cabo Fisterra” (Ventura Lado).

Others are concerned about the effects of tourism, not just from pilgrims, on Galicia’s coast. The 2002 oil spill brought volunteers from all over Spain to aid in the clean-up of the devastated coastline. Although Murado applauds the volunteers’ efforts and says that Spaniards grew increasingly fond of the region during this disaster, he expresses concern over the unexpected results:

Es una cruel ironía que el desastre del *Prestige*, al popularizar la costa gallega y crear un lazo emocional de muchos españoles con ella, haya tenido, indirectamente, un efecto perverso. A los pocos años, ha provocado un boom urbanístico en la costa que tan sólo acaba de empezar y que se está convirtiendo ya en una amenaza mayor, quizá, que la que supuso el petrolero hundido. (28)

The influx of tourists and of pilgrims is either a curse or a blessing for Galicians, depending on whom you ask. Furthermore, the distinction between tourist and pilgrim can be a point of contention, as it is for some villagers along the route. In Arca, Frey discovered that many villagers see pilgrims, especially young Spanish pilgrims, as tourists who decide to follow the Way because it is cheap tourism, or because they have nothing better to do.⁶³ Frey explains that, “It is hard for these villagers to relate to the idea that some pilgrims, tired of materialist values, want to do the pilgrimage austerely, with little money. Going without money is seen locally as having *mucho morro*- a lot of nerve- as a desire to abuse the road and the goodwill of

⁶³ The villagers do not mention the fairly numerous groups of Spanish youth who do make the pilgrimage for religious reasons, often with church groups. In the summer of 2010, for example, some 12,000 youths from parishes all over Spain met to participate in the Peregrinación y Encuentro de Jóvenes (PEJ), and walked to Santiago. See A.M, “12.000 jóvenes peregrinarán hasta Santiago esta semana.”

the people" (148). The American also finds a difference in locals' opinions of pilgrims before and after the 1993 Holy Year. Before, the villagers say, pilgrims were more authentic, but after the 1993 explosion, walking the pilgrimage roads had simply become a popular thing to do. The villagers claimed to take older pilgrims and foreign pilgrims more seriously, as the latter usually come from long distances and therefore more closely resemble the authentic pilgrim with religious motives.

Another problem is the sense of ownership of the Camino that many pilgrims seem to express. The inhabitants of Arca told Frey that as they passed from field to field on their tractors, they often received indignant looks from pilgrims for "somehow having disturbed their peace, without realizing that these roads have been in use by them their whole lives, and they, the pilgrims, are the visitors" (148). The anthropologist sees in these encounters a "clash of values", explaining that, "The villagers, as a group, do not have much sympathy for the existential worries that draw many city folk to the Camino. The villagers' understanding of the Camino and being a pilgrim is that it is a religious endeavor, which seemed to be lacking among most participants." Frey notes that the incomprehension between pilgrims and locals is mutual, citing one French *hospitalero* who complained, "The only thing you can talk to [the locals] about are harvests and tractors" (ibid.). There is also concern that the refuge run by these volunteers competes with the local village economy, and that these pseudo-pilgrims care only about cheap tourism. Since the villagers do not understand the existential motives, says Frey, the financial sense is all that they can comprehend.

Some pilgrim narratives offer evidence of this clash of values. Juanjo Alonso, who cycled from Roncesvalles to Santiago in 1992, explains that he is often forced to ride along the

highway, and laments the fact that, “al Camino original cada vez le cuesta más trabajo mantenerse vivo, acosado por el progreso y el desarrollo rural.” (148). His complaint is understandable, and other cyclers report that the proximity of pilgrim roads to the highway has resulted in fatalities (García Osuna 159-60). It is also true that the original paths of the Camino are not always known, much to several pilgrims’ dismay. What most strikes me about Alonso’s comment, however, are the two forces he claims to be “harassing” the Road in Galicia; progress and development. It is the very lack of progress and development that kept rural Galicia submerged in poverty for centuries, forced millions to abandon their land, and of course fed the stereotypes of, and discrimination against, Galicia. Yet, it is the Road that is “acosado”. Similar sentiments are present in many pilgrim narratives written in the last few decades. Factories, Santiago de Compostela’s airport at Lavacolla, and any other evidence of industrialization or modern life are seen as intrusions upon the Camino and upon the region’s natural landscape.

Observations like these underline the competing agendas of pilgrims and residents along the Camino. The latter, as we saw from Sanz Jarque’s conversation with the elderly rancher and farmer in Piedrafita, are determined to modernize their farms and remain in their hometowns. For many pilgrims, on the other hand, “modernization” and “Galicia” form a frightful combination of words. Some of the same accounts that praise the region’s charming frozen-in-time qualities worry that it will lose these as the region becomes more European and more modern. Gitlitz and Davidson encountered small but significant differences in Galicia between their pilgrimage in 1974 and those of the late 1990s. One such example is that of oxen pulling carts with wooden wheels and axles. The professors write,

In the 1970s we saw many dozen carts on the road, but in 1996 only one actually in use. Instead, we saw the carts parked in sheds, behind houses, and in barnyards, generally falling into ruin. By 1998 some of these had been reconditioned as planters for flowers. Others will surely end up in the hands of antiquaries, as the age-old material culture of rural Galicia passes from functional to decorative. (334)

Later, the pair notes,

When we hiked here [on the road between Arzúa and Arca] in 1974 it seemed as though every open field contained a few cows and a cowherd, often an older woman, umbrella in hand, patiently watching her charges manufacture milk for the region's well-known cheeses. Each time we have returned we have noted fewer pastures and fewer cows, now enclosed by fences, no cowherds in sight. Increasingly the hillsides are planted with eucalyptus trees, used for furniture and for the manufacture of paper (338).

In his discussion of modernity and Galicia, Murado maintains that many of the community's residents also feel that traditional society is threatened, and the only disagreement has to do with whether or not its disappearance is imminent, or has already happened (192). He also points out that the region's intellectuals in the early 20th century had the same fears about the disappearance of the "eternal Galicia" that they, along with part of the general population, do today (196). Murguía, Ramón Otero Pedrayo, Valle-Inclán (in *Romance de lobos*, for example) and many others warned of the imminent disappearance of traditional Galicia. Yet, years later, traditional Galicia remains, at least to some extent.

Commercialization of the Camino

In addition to re-signaling routes, opening new hostels and reforming some towns, much more has changed about the Way of Santiago in the last two decades. Currently, the ancient Road

of Stars is being promoted as a continuing symbol of European unity, but the scale of such promotion has stirred up discord far and wide. Just as several Galician villagers in Arca noted, Paolo Caucci, an Italian expert on the Jacobean pilgrimage, maintains that there is a definitive change in the sense of the Way after the 1993 Holy Year, so much so that one can talk about the pre-1993 Camino, and the post-1993 Camino. That was the year that the number of annual pilgrims receiving a *Compostelana* ballooned from 20,000 to 100,000, which clearly meant a boost for the economy as well as for research and dissemination of information relating to the pilgrimage. At the time, Caucci recalls, "I was conscious of the fact that what was happening was something unstoppable", and today he is troubled by the growing phenomenon of the masses which, he says, can change the religious meaning of the Camino. The historian warns, "We are in danger of the Camino turning into a theme park" (Lobato).

There have been other grumblings about the supposed resemblance between the Camino and theme parks. Upon arrival in O Cebreiro, Lee Hoinacki observes,

the collection of buildings is another European 'living' Disneyland. About thirty people actually live here, most apparently employed to serve tourists and wait on dinner guests who drive to the top of the mountain to eat. [...] All the buildings are restored or in the process of being rebuilt. Two of the *pallozas* contain an ethnographic museum. Perhaps when the building program is complete, the authorities will install authentic artists and 'folk' to entertain visitors. (217)

Frey also finds some of the promotions Disney-esque, and reveals that,

In a last-minute attempt to capitalize on the resurgence of interest in the Way the Galician government invested millions of pesetas in the ill-conceived Plan Xacobeo 93, a plan to make the Camino a tourist trap par excellence. Pelegrín,⁶⁴ a Disneylandized version of

the modern pilgrim, became the Xunta's standard-bearer and began to march across Spain inviting citizens of all walks of life to become pilgrims for a day in Santiago. Behind the movement to attract pilgrims to Santiago was a thinly veiled attempt to draw them to Galicia and the coastal zones for a pleasure weekend. [...] The 1993 Holy Year came on the heels of the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and the World Expo in Seville. Busloads of curious arrived from all parts of Spain looking for Spain's third fair. (251)

Frey relates the anecdote that the president of Xacobeo 93, José Carro Otero, shared with her: Spanish visitors would arrive at Santiago's historic Praza do Obradoiro and ask Santiago natives where one could buy tickets for Xacobeo 93 (252). Similar promotions of the Camino, or advertisements for Galicia disguised as promotions of the Camino, continue. For Xacobeo 2010, Pelegrín was replaced by Xubi⁶⁵, who one might mistake for a character from the children's program *Barney and Friends*, but certainly not for the official mascot of a thousand-year-old pilgrimage recognized as one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. One can only imagine what Walter Starkie, the mid-20th century Irish pilgrim who was concerned about the authenticity of the Way, would say about the 2009 movie *Al final del camino*, a ridiculous tale of pilgrims walking with a wacky relationship guru. The film, paid for in part by Spain's Ministry of Culture and the Xunta de Galicia, presumably with the intention of promoting the Way, showcases Galicia's stunning scenery but otherwise consists of little more than obscenities, gratuitous sex scenes and sexual innuendo, earning dismal reviews that declared it an insult to anyone who does the pilgrimage (*Al final del camino*).

⁶⁴ Barcelona also created a cartoon character, Coti, to help promote its 1992 Olympic Games. By 1999 Pelegrín had met Pelegrina, his long-eyelashed pink feminine counterpart.

⁶⁵ See the mascot's homepage at <http://www.xubi.es/>.

Caucci, Frey and Hoinacki are not alone in their concerns, even though some brush them off, convinced that the Camino is something so much larger than tourism or investment by interested parties that no one and nothing can distort its true meaning. Jack Hitt counts himself among the non-worriers, insisting, “The road has been manhandled by everyone from Charlemagne to Queen Isabella to the generalisimo. The cons and schemes come and go. [...] No one who endures months of walking through northern Spain will mistake the trip for a visit to Euro Disney. The road can take care of itself” (218). Scholars Gitlitz and Davidson also point out that a Compostelan tourist industry is nothing new. Just like today, merchants of yore touted their inns and restaurants throughout the towns, even using dishonest practices to profit from the pilgrims (341). Suso de Toro, who is from Santiago, agrees that the previous merchant route is now a tourist route, which is a more complex phenomenon, yet is not necessarily a reason to panic (138). Some pilgrims even find the route to be less touristic than they expected. Conrad Rudolph, who walked the Way in 1996, remarks, “There is a very little of the grotesque commercialism associated with the Santiago pilgrimage that is so readily found at such once-imposing pilgrimage sites as Rocamadour or Mont-Saint-Michel” (34).

Hitt points out that modern pilgrims who lament bureaucratic planning and promotion of the Way are fooling themselves if they think that it has ever been “an entirely ‘pure’ endeavor between the pilgrim and the divine powers. The orders of Cluny, after all, would be the medieval equivalent of those who today build hostels or restore the roads in order for their own benefit” (216). The American magazine writer even says that Augustinian and Cluniac monasteries’ “pan-European organization would make Brussels look like a couple of county agents” (216). This is not to mention the more obvious fact that the whole pilgrimage to St. James’ tomb was

immensely beneficial for the Asturian-Leonese monarchs, or that, “Even the execrable Franco gave money at the end of the civil war and twisted the revitalization of the road into a victory campaign” (Hitt 216).

These authors all have valid points. However, the problem today is not locals hawking souvenirs or hotel rooms; it is that the Camino itself is now seen as a good to be sold, and many are worried that this damages the spirit of the pilgrimage. Frey insists that the “ill-conceived marketing” of 1993 “turned the pilgrimage into a spectacle. The Way became marketable in the 1990s on the public front as well. Images associated with the pilgrimage are being used to sell a wide variety of products — milk, furniture, even telephone service” (252). The royal family did parts of the pilgrimage on foot, which were well-publicized media events. Even the airline Iberia found a way to be part of the promotion of the Road, and in the mid-1990s offered one-way fares from Santiago for those who could show the pilgrim’s credential (Frey 252). Hoinacki confessed to feeling “certain repugnance” toward the advertisements for the array of events organized for the 1993 Holy Year (264). The fact that the Camino is a “producto turístico”, a term mentioned often in the press regarding the Xacobeo 2010, is what is so disconcerting to many, not just the fact that some towns, groups or individuals are especially economically blessed by St. James. Commercialization of the route existed in the past, but not to the tune of millions of dollars from the multinational mega-company Coca-Cola, which along with companies like Iberia, El Corte Inglés and Repsol have become sponsors of the Xacobeo 2010.

El Camino de Santiago: Galicia’s star tourist product

As Gitlitz and Davidson noted after their 1998 pilgrimage, “It is clear that with the commercialization of the Road and of Spain’s regional cultures, during this particular phase of its long history O Cebreiro is milking the seven fat cows of tourism” (305). The same could be said for the whole Galician route, but whether the commercialization of the Camino is a dangerous new phenomenon or is older than Santiago’s cathedral itself matters less than the most obvious certainty: the pilgrimage has become highly marketable, and anyone who can manage to has become involved with it in some way. What I am concerned with here is how this phenomenon affects Galicia.

The strategies of 1993 may have been “ill-conceived” as Frey claims, but they were successful at drawing visitors to Santiago, and at drawing Galicians to Santiago. As Xosé Manuel Santos Solla points out, the Camino de Santiago has become “el producto estrella del turismo gallego” (140). This was not always so. While the Camino was literally in their back yards, it was not something strictly Galician that was suddenly discovered by outsiders and made internationally famous. We will recall from Chapter 3 that there has long been an emotional distance between Galicians and the Jacobean pilgrimage. Then, the upheavals of the 20th century translated to a drastic reduction in pilgrims, and walking the route seemed like a thing of the past. Álvaro Cunqueiro drove the Camino in 1962 and met a few young Galician boys who had never heard of the word “pilgrim”, although they lived right next to the French Road (38). In the 1970s, villagers along the Way were puzzled to see pilgrims, especially when they traveled by foot. Even as late as 1985, supermarket employees in Arzúa stopped Northern Irish pilgrim Bert Slader and called in a local woman who had lived in England to act as interpreter, asking him

numerous questions about what he was doing there, as they “were aware of the significance of the Road to Santiago but slightly puzzled that a foreigner should be on it” (Slader 163). By the early 1990s, however, it is likely that Slader would have experienced less excitement from the locals, who by then saw thousands of pilgrims pass through their town each year.

Going back further, in the earlier discussion of perceptions of 15th-, 16th- and 17th-century Galicia, we saw the differences between Galician pilgrimages like San Andrés de Teixido, and that of Santiago, the Spanish (and now international) pilgrimage. This tension continued throughout the centuries. In 1929, three members of the *Xeración Nós* completed a pilgrimage to San Andrés de Teixido, an experience recorded by the intellectual and writer Ramón Otero Pedrayo in *Pelerinaxes*. In a prologue to the book, Vicente Risco criticizes those who seek international fame for Santiago (without mentioning who), stating, “I said long ago that what Santiago needs is pilgrims, since the tourists come to do nothing more than to profane the sacred stones with their snobbish glances” (8). Risco’s comment also sounds similar to those of the villagers in Arca who told Frey that pseudo-pilgrims look at the locals with annoyance, as if they were invading the pilgrims’ space. What the authors of *Pelerinaxes* disapprove of is not the pilgrimage itself, but rather tourists and the appropriation of the Way by non-Galicians. Even decades later, in 1978, William Christian, a professor who has written extensively about religion in Spain, noted that, “The devotion to Santiago is more international than strictly Spanish and perhaps more Spanish than Galician” (555). Otero Pedrayo and Risco offer San Andrés de Teixido as a viable alternative, still untouched by the outside world and belonging only to Galicia. In the description of the small shrine, there is an implicit reference to, and contrast with, Santiago. The author observes that there are no markers along the way because they are not

necessary. He insists that, “The meaning of this trail, which has been carved out by the steps of generations of Galicians, needs no explanation. Only tourists need a comfortable, ready-made trail” (195). In another implicit contrast with the capital city, Otero Pedrayo claims that neither Charlemagne nor any other king has visited this shrine, and no bishop mandated the construction of a grand cathedral (199-200). The author indicates that Galicians do not need an outside stamp of approval to validate their traditions. The promotion of the shrine of San Andrés de Teixido also has to do with the *galeguistas*’ exaltation of Celtic culture and the theory of *atlantismo*. The coastal shrine could be considered part of the “finisterres atlánticos” supposedly settled by Celts and in direct contact with the Europe of the Atlantic (Gaspar 81).

However, Otero Pedrayo changes course in other publications, such as his 1926 *Guía de Galicia*, written in Castilian and therefore directed towards a wider audience than *Pelerinaxes*, which is written in Galician. The author addresses outsiders in the first line of his book, telling them of his desire to be “friend and comrade of any traveler who arrives to Galicia with a spirit open to the natural and artistic beauties” of his homeland (*Guía* 5). He stresses the cultural significance of the city he considers here to be the “spiritual, historical and sentimental metropolis” of his homeland and cites the pilgrimages to Santiago as the culminating point of Galician civilization (123). While over seventy pages of *Guía de Galicia* are devoted to the apostolic city, I was unable to find even one mention of San Andrés de Teixido. The cultural revivalists used Santiago as proof to the outside world of their region’s cultural importance, while at the same time resenting tourism, and viewing it as a necessary evil for the economic benefit of the traditionally poor region. Furthermore, as Silvia Gaspar explains in her book *A Xeración Nós e o Camiño de Santiago* (1996), Risco, Otero Pedrayo and the rest of the *Nós*

intellectuals fully recognized the importance of Compostela in Galician culture, but for them, the apostolic city would forever be associated with the Middle Ages and with the “golden age” of Gelmírez and Fonseca. At the same time, the city conserved a cosmopolitan charm with the constant influx of foreigners, whereas the rest of Galician towns and cities had an unmistakable provincial spirit, that, when compared to Santiago de Compostela, could only represent decadence to the outsider (41). The members of the *Xeración Nós*, as we will recall from Chapter 5, were *europeístas*: Risco wrote that Galicians, spiritually, “are and should be European before Spanish”. As such, they recognized the importance of the pilgrimage destination in achieving their objective of Europeanization, their potential “visa for full integration into the world of the North [of Europe]” (42). Gelmírez’s Compostela was “la prueba viva de lo que pudo ser el despegue de Galicia”: it was urban, had a political history that linked it to Rome and Borgoña, was at the center of the medieval world of culture, was home to an important university, and was a spiritual center that was open to the entire world. In short, the entire *Nós* group promoted the Galician roots of European culture and identified the European character of their region with the city of Santiago. The city’s medieval past was a recurring theme in the works of the nationalists⁶⁶, who counted on its cultural importance and/or the region’s *atlantismo* as their doors to European society (41-42).

In addition to the St. Andrew / St. James opposition, there is also the idea of the two Santiagos. There have been many representations of the saint throughout the centuries, but the

⁶⁶ It was not long, however, before ideological differences and the political situation in Spain would divide the group. In July of 1936, the journal *Nós* disappeared, and some of the members—such as Castelao—went into exile, while others tried to avoid persecution, with varying degrees of success. Vicente Risco shocked his fellow intellectual friends by supporting Franco.

most common are that of Santiago the pilgrim and Santiago Matamoros. Castelao was certainly not the first to depict both of these, but his message about which one represents his homeland is noteworthy. Huidobro y Serna angrily recalls the nationalist's two sketches, in which he claims "El nonato nacionalismo gallego había encontrado su trofeo" (289). The first representation of the apostle was a humble pilgrim with a sweet and pious expression, drawn with affection and devotion. The second was "ferocious, hard, bitter", and Huidobro y Serna insists that the artist took pains to present him as mean and incredibly hateful; "even his horse seems to want to be free of the weight he carries" (ibid). The cause for Huidobro y Serna's anger? Castelao titled the first Santiago, the humble pilgrim, "O noso" (Ours). The second, the ruthless warrior, "O d'elos" (Theirs). In these two images we see Galicia's self-characterization and a rejection of the imposition of the Castilian warrior Santiago. Again, the *galeguistas* were intent on distinguishing the peaceful Atlantic/ European Galicia from the Iberic Spain of conquest. It is worth mentioning that half a century later, the most well-known image of the saint, sword in hand and defeated Moor underfoot, began to be seen as politically incorrect and was concealed on many statues of the national patron saint. Castelao's Santiago, "O noso", a peaceful and humble saint, seems to be the most convenient, or at least the most politically correct, image of the patron for today's global society.

The "Ours vs. Theirs" spirit is still somewhat present in a battle for ownership of the Camino. Suso de Toro points out that this Road has always been a "transpyreneen route" of French, Germans, Belgians, and other nationalities, but was infrequently used by Galicians; "The Camino has historically been done by those who arrived from outside, and it shows" (Toro 134). The writer adds that "the spirit of the Camino is outside of Galicia", although he notes that this

began to change with the 1993 Xacobeo, when entire parishes set off towards Compostela, recovering a tradition that he says had been entirely lost in his homeland. Rivas, on the other hand, insisted in 1989 that the tradition was never lost: “Me he encontrado con venerables galleguistas agnósticos que acuden todos los años a Compostela con una constancia religiosa, y sólo la prisión les privó de este acto de fe. Incluso en los peores años del franquismo, se celebraba en las catacumbas ese Día con una cobertura religiosa, la llamada Misa de Rosalía” (*El bonsai* 19). The difference is that Rivas refers to the *galeguistas* as far back as the 1940s, for whom Compostela’s importance has already been mentioned, while Suso de Toro speaks of the general population. The author of *La flecha amarilla* explains that in the 1990s, “A su modo, a modo de romería, los gallegos están haciendo suya la idea de peregrinar a Santiago. Es un modo antiguo de asimilar una idea nueva. Una idea que, por cierto, les llegó a través de los medios de comunicación. La televisión les recordó lo que tenían delante” (135). The promotion of Galicia was so effective that the region sold it to outsiders and to themselves.

What we have seen in the last twenty years or so, then, is an intensification of Galicia’s attempt to re-assume ownership of the Camino, making it more identifiable with their region than it is with Spain. I say “intensification” because it is not an entirely new effort; we have already seen that the region’s cultural revivalists had similar objectives decades ago. However, the government, the tourism industry, and private business now are powerful leaders in this fight, and timing truly is everything. Manuel Mandianes Castro confirms that with the new revival of the Camino, “There is an attempt to identify Galicia with the Camino of Santiago”, as well as an attempt to identify Galicia with the idea of Europe, just as the *Nós* writers hoped to do (46). Frey observed this phenomenon in the 1990s. She explains that the city of Santiago, in conjunction

with the Xunta, created a campaign for the Holy Year called “Compostela 93” (separate from Xacobeo 1993), emphasizing the city itself, not the saint. The American anthropologist declared,

There is an implicit rejection of Santiago the saint. The following quote illustrates the city’s manipulation of Santiago’s cultural patrimony: ‘Today the celebration of the Cultural Capital of Europe in Santiago will help to intensify the relationship between the culture of Galicia and the peoples of Europe, thus serving as a reminder of their intimate 1,000 year relationship and to consolidate it in the future. (253)

Frey concludes, “Santiago’s relationship to Spain is less important than it and Galicia’s direct link to Europe” (*ibid*). This was apparent in the marketing of the 2010 Holy Year, whose slogans were “the year of Galicia and of all Galicians”, and “Now is when, Galicia is where.” The focus is largely on Santiago and on Galicia, not on the rest of Spain, although the pilgrimage is marketed to the rest of Spain. *La Voz de Galicia* reported that 98.8 percent of Spaniards read, listened to or saw on television some type of publicity for the 2010 *Xacobeo* an average of thirty-one times throughout the year (Cheda).

As the slogan suggested, Galicia was the place to be in 2010. This last Holy Year attracted more pilgrims than ever before, and Santiago greeted over nine million visitors during the Jubilee Year, exceeding the expected figure of eight million. Although part of this high number was a result of the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Santiago that autumn, the 2,210 events organized to celebrate Xacobeo 2010 (the majority by the Xunta, others in cooperation with the bank Novacaixagalicia) drew more than 6.5 million people (Cheda). If Otero Pedrayo thought that Santiago was overrun with tourists in the 1920s, he would have been shocked to see the city in the summer of 2010. Over 50,000 pilgrims received the official *Compostelana* in August alone, an enormous increase from the 5,000 who received it for the last Holy Year just six years

earlier (E.P.). Even in the midst of a serious economic crisis, the president of the Galician government, Alberto Núñez Feijoo, affirmed that 2010 was the best Holy Year in the history of Galicia, with the highest numbers of visitors and pilgrims the community had ever seen (EFE “Feijoo garantiza”). In the midst of what the Xunta deemed “Galicia’s year of tourism”, the government pledged to consolidate itself as a “Vanguard autonomous community” and to maintain its status as a tourist destination in the future (Oliver). Although it did not share in the tourist boom along the Mediterranean coast, decades later, Galicia is becoming another type of European tourist destination.

Becoming such a destination requires some public spending, and not all Galicians are happy about it. As of January 2010, the Xunta was set to spend 11.8 million euros on cultural acts to promote the Holy Year, which the Ministry of Culture called “el proyecto cultural, turístico y espiritual más ambicioso de la historia de Galicia” (Pampín). This spending comes in the midst of an economic crisis in which levels of unemployment climbed so much in 2010 that roughly one out of every five Spaniards was without a job, leaving some gallegos grumbling about the millions doled out for “free” concerts and promotional events⁶⁷ while many struggle to scrape together enough for their mortgage payment. Furthermore, the pilgrimage is a profitable phenomenon for Santiago and the parts of the region through which the Road passes, but not for all of Galicia.

Regardless of whether or not the regional government should invest so much in promoting the Camino, the number of visitors proves that their strategies were effective. The

⁶⁷ Furthermore, some of these events have nothing to do with Galician or Spanish culture, such as concerts given by British or American pop groups. Xacobeo 2010 did have, however, twenty-three private sponsors, who invested nearly twenty million euros to make the year a success (Cheda).

pilgrimage is one of Galicia's finest treasures and as such, it attracts tourists' euros. As Dorothy Noyes points out, "Provincial regions increasingly need to live off their symbols" (11). The Camino de Santiago is Galicia's easiest symbol to live off, and there is an obvious awareness of this fact. Even in the years before Xacobeo 2010, the vast majority of the commercials produced by TurGalicia, the official tourist agency of the Xunta de Galicia, include some imagery related to the famous pilgrimage, such a shell worn by pilgrims or images of the cathedral (the background music for these commercials, by the way, is usually Celtic-inspired). These are commercials used to promote Galicia as a whole, not just Santiago, evidence that the Jacobean Way has become one of the most recognized, if not the most recognized, symbol of Galicia.

Conclusions

If we stop to reflect upon the long history of the green corner of northwestern Spain, the European *Finisterre*, it seems that region finds itself in an exciting moment of its history in these first two decades of the 21st century. The nation that had experienced a fall from grace since its glory days as the cultural center of Medieval Europe languished for centuries, but has reinvented itself. While it still lags behind the rest of Spain in many aspects and faces serious challenges like depopulation and linguistic issues with *Galego*, Galicia now enjoys more prosperity than it has in centuries.

The height of Jacobean pilgrimage in the Middle Ages was also a moment of great prosperity for Galicia, and the renewal of this pilgrimage once again coincides with a period of growth for the region. This growth, partially due to tourism, benefits Galicia economically and also has contributed to an improved image of the region, both within Spain and outside its borders. The Camino de Santiago has become popular internationally, and some pilgrim narratives, including Hape Kerkeling's *I'm Off Then: My Journey Along the Camino de Santiago*, have become bestsellers. Therefore, while all Galicians may not directly enjoy the economic benefits that the pilgrimage brings to the region, the community as a whole has gained greater prestige internationally, in part thanks to foreign pilgrims' accounts whose experiences in the region are read by millions worldwide.

At the same time, as we have seen, these foreign pilgrims do perpetuate the stereotypes of green, rural Galicia of Celts and mystical landscapes, similar to the image of Galicia that the *Nós* writers and the 19th century nationalists promoted. While writers like Rivas struggle to create a cultural identity that goes well beyond these clichés, and to create a universal literature in an increasingly globalized world, pilgrim accounts do actually help Galicia's incorporation into Europe. Cristina Sánchez-Conejero insists that, with Spain's "new European face", it is more necessary than ever to erase the black legend of Galicia. Spain's Europeanization, the author says, is a decisive moment for the creation of a new identity for the region (229-30). The revival of the Camino is a decisive moment for this as well, and pilgrim narratives are helping to create a new image of Galicia in Europe and beyond, even if it is an idealized vision.

One thing seems certain. Pilgrims will probably not dispel the clichés of Celtic Galicia, magical Galicia, or rural Galicia of a million cows. They will most likely continue to disseminate these ideas and feed the tourist industry, which also perpetuates this topical Galicia, and frustrate the region's writers who hope to dispel such stereotypes. What the experiences of pilgrims who discover Galicia through the Camino de Santiago will certainly do, however, and have been doing for decades, is invite the world to come to Galicia and judge it for themselves.

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